

# GRAPHIC FORMS

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# GRAPHIC FORMS



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# GRAPHIC FORMS

*the arts as related to the book*

GYÖRGY KEPES • P J CONKWRIGHT • WADWIGGINS

EDNA BEILENSON • CARL PURINGTON ROLLINS

DONALD KLOPFER • PAUL RAND • MERLE ARMITAGE

WALTER DORWIN TEAGUE • SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN

PETER BEILENSON • HERSCHEL LEVIT • LYND WARD

J DONALD ADAMS • PHILIP HOFER

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## Publisher's Preface

I FEEL VERY HUMBLE IN ATTEMPTING TO WRITE A PREFACE TO *Graphic Forms*. The people whose work is printed here are all vigorous and outstanding practitioners in a field where I am certainly no more than an interested and appreciative layman. Worse still, as a publisher of books who must be concerned with such in-artistic things as accounts and balance sheets, I frequently find myself obliged to trim the specifications for a handsome book, to prune out of those specifications some of the elements of beauty of form which are most essential in the mind of the designer and which would be considered intrinsic to the volume by most if not all of those who have written this book. After such a trimming and pruning, the designers with whom I work are doubtful of my right to the phrase "interested and appreciative layman." Yet the facts of publishing finance do often contradict the ideas of a book designer, no matter how much better in every sense the specific book would be if the designer had his way. Therefore, I am inclined to think it a good thing that the high concepts and the enthusiasm of this book must be tempered by the cautious prefatory words of a publisher who is ignorant in the arts, just as I think it even better that some of the principles these authors follow are through this book made available to people like me.

*Graphic Forms*, the book, grew out of a series of four public meetings held under the same title, January 17-18, 1949, at the Fogg Museum of Art in Cambridge. These meetings were sponsored jointly by The Bookbuilders of Boston and the Harvard University Press. The idea itself that a forum on the arts in relation to the book would be a good thing was developed in The Bookbuilders Workshop; the moving spirits of the Workshop, headed by Burton J. Jones its Chairman, persuaded first their parent organization and then the Press that the plan deserved support. Dates were set, distinguished speakers accepted invitations to address the meetings, and the public

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came in such numbers that the large Fogg auditorium was filled four consecutive times. Thus the value of the idea conceived by the members of The Bookbuilders Workshop was proved, I believe to the satisfaction of all concerned. I hope that the book now published will serve as permanent confirmation of that proof.

The speakers at our January meetings are with one addition and one omission the authors of *Graphic Forms*. Paul Rand was prevented by earlier engagements from taking part in the discussions but was kind enough to write for us his provocative "Black in the Visual Arts," a most welcome addition to the book. Dean James C. Boudreau of Pratt Institute Art School, who generously agreed to speak in place of Mr. Rand and on a different subject, decided not to revise his informal remarks for print; his absence from this volume is regretted as deeply as his coöperation in the symposium was appreciated.

To these speakers who served their arts without monetary reward and then, at great additional expense in time and effort, revised their talks to fit the requirements of book form sincere thanks must be given. A special word of appreciation is due Philip Hofer, whose admirable summation of the four meetings was one of their outstanding features and whose words, as they appear here, have suffered severely in color and content because of limitations of space; Mr. Hofer's generous acceptance of drastic editorial abridgment matched in quality the excellence of the commentary with which he brought our meetings to a close. It is a pleasure also to acknowledge the cordial hospitality of John P. Coolidge, Director of the Fogg Museum, and his entire staff. I am sure that The Bookbuilders of Boston, the Press's partner in the symposium and in the publication of this book, will allow me to express our joint gratitude to all.

THOMAS J. WILSON

# Contents

## 1 FUNCTION *fitness to purpose*

<i>function in modern design</i>	3
GYÖRGY KEPES	
<i>university press book design</i>	15
P J CONKWRIGHT	
<i>trade book design</i>	23
W A DWIGGINS	
<i>evaluation</i>	28
CARL PURINGTON ROLLINS	

## 2 FORM *structure and shape*

<i>black in the visual arts</i>	35
PAUL RAND	
<i>static and dynamic concepts</i>	43
WALTER DORWIN TEAGUE	
<i>the illustrator and the book</i>	53
LYND WARD	

### 3 STYLE

*individual expression*

<i>the author and the printed book</i>	65
DONALD KLOPFER	
<i>the avant-garde</i>	73
HERSCHEL LEVIT	
<i>experimentation</i>	78
EDNA BEILENSON	
<i>the function of the amateur printer</i>	87
PETER BEILENSON	

### 4 PROSPECT

*an extensive view*

<i>as the etcher sees it</i>	97
SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN	
<i>the new forms — and books</i>	105
MERLE ARMITAGE	
<i>tomorrow's readers</i>	116
J DONALD ADAMS	
<i>epilogue</i>	125
PHILIP HOFER	



# 1 FUNCTION

*fitness to purpose*



# *function in modern design*

## GYÖRGY KEPES

TODAY'S OBSESSION FOR SPEED AND QUANTITY HAS PROFOUNDLY influenced the ways in which we think and feel. Mass production and mass communication, with their characteristic standardized thoughts and vision, have overworked ideas, making of them exhausted stereotypes.

We tend to mistake the slogan for truth, the formula for the living form, repetition of habit for cultural continuity. Inertia leads us to carry this dead body of lifeless thoughts around with us. To halt the depletion of the life of the words we use, of the ideas and purposes that guide us, we must constantly overhaul our mental equipment.

Vigilance is needed not only in the spheres where we are vaguely aware of the intentional misuse and manipulation of words and ideas, as in political propaganda or the cheaper aspects of advertising. It is needed also in fields where we assume that we know what we are talking about, in our own profession. Here we must be doubly alert, for we lack the perspective that distance offers.

I have been asked to write about function in design. The words *design* and *function* are prominent in our daily vocabulary. The coupled term, functional design, is accepted today as the core of professional activities which aim to shape man's physical environment. Has the term *functional design* escaped the fate of other repeated terms? Battles are still fought, and the last skirmishes under the banner "form follows function" are still with us; but there is reason for believing that the underlying thought has lost its living strength.

It seems, therefore, appropriate to begin by asking questions, by examining the fundamental terms that we generally assume have

## GYÖRGY KEPES

a clear meaning. Taking nothing for granted, let us subject our professional catchwords to strict scrutiny.

What is function in design? To answer this question logically is to answer with relevance to the purpose that initiated the question. To recognize the validity of a logic of design one must first recognize the root purpose.

What is then the purpose of man-made design? Is it sufficient to answer that the purpose of a building is shelter? the purpose of a chair to support the human body? of a book to permit its being read? Can these functions be understood only within the narrow radius of what we consider their function to be, or do we need to inquire still further until we reach a final and common root of all these purposes?

If the roots of those thoughts, which today seem self-evident and which we use frequently in a mechanical repetition, are traced back to the ideas and works of those great pioneers of the recent past who gave us these thoughts, it will become obvious that they meant more than most of us mean today. Louis Sullivan, whose work and writing became the guiding force of contemporary design thinking, was fully aware of the depth and range of the issues involved. He wrote these words about his own goal, "To make an architecture that fitted its function, a realistic architecture based on well-defined utilitarian need — that all practical demands of utility should be paramount as basis of planning and design; that no architectural dictum or tradition or superstition should stand in the way." And he wrote also, putting his own thought in a broader context, "Man perhaps and probably was the only real background that gave distinction to works appearing in the foreground as separated things."<sup>1</sup> For him and for all the great men who paved our way to a healthier thinking, it was always self-evident that design is not for design's sake, that design is for man.

Man was the root of their thought, and human function gave direction and measure to whatever they were doing. They attacked with admirable concentration new structural possibilities, but this

<sup>1</sup> Louis H. Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York, 1929).



## *function in modern design*

technical mastery was only a means to an end and never the end itself. It was not the house function that they built for, but a function of man by means of a building. Not the chair, not the book, which was functioning, but again man, who through his design of the chair and the book could function better, that is, live fuller and freer. And furthermore, it was not merely one aspect of man, not just the feet, the hands, the lungs, or the eyes, but man as a whole. Everything that they conceived was considered in its implications to all the levels of existence of a human being. Although they fully recognized that straightforward thinking in physical and utilitarian terms is a necessary step in putting a design on a healthy basis, they did not forget that the elementary utilitarian functions and the honest use of materials and techniques are conditions only, not ultimate purposes.

Man was in focus; but not man only as he was then. They aimed to satisfy his needs for comfort as a means to help men grow. And we may quote Sullivan again: "The fabricating of a virile, a proud civilization, rich in its faith in man, is surely to constitute the absorbing interest of the coming generation. It will begin to take a functional form out of the resolve of choice, and the liberation of those instincts within us which are akin to the dreams of childhood, and which, continuing on through the children and the children of the children, shall be a guide evermore."

Their work had a living fiber because it was intimately connected with a living human core. For design that integrates life, functioning for man, functions in terms of the materials it uses, the structures it applies, and the form in which it is shaped. Designs which have their root in the heart of man, and not in his pocket, are alive. Designs which grow organically with the calm dignity of honesty, not with the haste of a bad conscience, can only and do only provide the values needed for human growth. They are functional in the truest meaning of the word.

And so let us understand that the issue is not functional design as such, that it is not just the "know how," but the "know why" and the "know what." The crux of the issue is not the mere physical

## GYÖRGY KEPES

principle, which is as old as nature and history, but the strength and scope of application in the concrete context of genuine human needs. This means that before we proceed to design any object for a given purpose, we should question the purpose itself. The aim of the object should not simply be taken for granted. It should be evaluated in its broadest scope.

Does the so-called functional design which we are so proud of, frequently justly proud, function in this broader sense? We have learned to think honestly in the terms of the materials and tools used and to respect these materials and tools. We are sensitive to new potentialities and zealously follow new materials and new techniques. We design with a simplicity of single-minded purpose, with an economy which is the logic of design, carefully avoiding all waste. The objects we make have visual congruence between the inside and the outside and are transparent in meaning. But did we apply this honesty of thinking, the economy of the making, the alertness to the changing tools and media, to the human material which is the root and purpose, the tool and the user of our designs? Are we devoting as much care to man's need, to his intrinsic nature, as we do to building with reinforced concrete or to bending plywood into furniture?

Has not our concern for the efficiency of the detail led to the neglect of the efficiency of the most important design, the design of man as an individual and as a member of society? It is a brutal paradox of our age that by concentrating all efforts on material products the very heart of all these achievements is neglected; the producing man, the active man, man's happiness, growth, and promise. For how could we hope that all these wonderful, neat, crisp, functional designs that the best designers are creating in their best moments could truly fulfill their function when man becomes used up making the goods which should benefit him? The pleasure in making, that William Morris called "the only birthright of labour," is for most of us only a distant memory of the past. This emphasis on the finished object creates a "ready-made" attitude that rests satisfied with appearances and limited utility. Conse-

## *function in modern design*

quently, the object never seems to take its place in the broader area of total human needs. It is time now for redirection. Let us discipline our thinking by tracing all that we are doing or are intending to do to the original purpose, the human purpose. What we have learned in this recent past we must apply to a broader context. To give functional design a new living meaning we must concentrate on establishing a scale of values. And in the hierarchy of values, the human values should again regain priority. We should recognize levels of functions in which one contains another and keep in mind that the container of all values is man. We must develop a functional thinking, directed toward a design where all levels of human intentions and objects for use are organically interconnected, as only this cohesion will sanction their existence.

What are the possible concrete implications of these thoughts and hopes on designing forms of visual communication, in particular book design? What is the status of contemporary book design in relationship to other designs of today and in relationship to these reorientations that we plead for?

When other man-made objects, not hampered by tradition, went through healthy metamorphoses, when almost every product was revaluated in terms of utilitarian functions, new materials and techniques, the form of the book is barely touched by the recent technological and scientific progress.

It is evident that if the book is to function on those broader terms that we hope for it must first catch up with the temper of the age, with industrial conditions, and must reach a new functional level on a realistic basis. Bookmaking must become efficient in all those means which are now affecting the design of most fabricated objects.

The first task is then to rethink the media in terms of the mechanical inventions and readjust the work to the advanced printing techniques and reproduction methods. If book design will be made with an inventive spirit, fed by the thorough knowledge of advanced production methods, it will inevitably have the stamp of honesty and clarity, the first requisite of functional design. If the designers

## GYÖRGY KEPES

will conceive their objects with a forward-looking thinking attitude toward their tools, their work will not be sidetracked into the costly fake trimmings of traditional styles, nor will it be necessary to use the patina of the past or the chromium-plated glitter of the present. Book designs which are done with a genuine understanding of mass production give a promise that mass production will serve as a material basis of a democratic society, giving honest service to the largest number of people.

But book design, to catch up with other design, must be efficient not only in its making, but also in its performance. The designer must rethink the book functions in their physical, optical, and psychological aspects. A book has weight, size, thickness, and tactile qualities, qualities which are handled by the hand, as its optical form is handled by the eye. The physical form of the book will be efficient in its functioning if it fits the need of the hand which uses it. The book can be conceived of in the same sense as a handle of a tool or a utensil, and must be molded so that the hand can "operate" it with perfect control.

As a visual form a book must meet the needs of the eye. The factors influencing visibility and legibility are correlated into functioning visual unity if the size of the page, the type sizes, the distribution of the type, their weight and proportion, the brightness contrast between the color of the paper and the ink, are controlled relationships. But since not an isolated eye alone but an eye with the mind behind it does the reading, the organization of the printed page should be guided by a full understanding of the most advanced knowledge of the findings of psychology. It has been disclosed that one does not perceive patterns and meaning by a piecemeal assembling of the individual parts, but by grasping total relationships. We do not read by piecemeal assembly of the individual letters but by seeing unified wholes, configurations of words or word units. Printing limited by the technical processes of making the letters or casting types and printing them in the mechanical logic of the press cannot meet the requirement of the visual organization processes. The regimentation of reading conditioned by the



## *function in modern design*

mechanics of printing, forcing the eye to follow the rigid compulsion of the lines, is not the optimum visual condition of comfortable reading. Eye fatigue is due to the monotony of the visual task. New possibilities of technical inventions and the findings about the laws of visual perception can be synchronized. There is a challenge for coming bookmakers, and there is a hope that printing can undergo a reformulation which will bring book design to a truly contemporary level.

A clear visual structure of the individual pages is not sufficient to make a book integrated. A book commands movement of the reading eye. As a musical composition has a melodic line that binds the tunes into a living continuity, so the book should have a continuity of movement. The dust jacket, the binding, the end papers, the title page, the front matter, the chapter heads, and all the pages should be integrated by an orchestration of the visual sequences. And this directed movement should not be a servitude enforced on the reader. A book is not music, which has only one direction. One wants some time to reread a passage or to stay longer at some part. The organization of the visual flow must be flexible enough to escape regimentation.

The linear continuity, however well organized, still cannot fulfill all demands for a unified design. The eye has to take a continuously changing span of attention in following up word, phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph, chapter, and volume. It has various tasks in reading and in looking at pictures. Reading has a changing tempo conditioned by meaning and by the visual keys to read these meanings.

There is an inherent meter and rhythm in the sequence of symbols, words, and images. Books of today very rarely meet a form that corresponds to the living pulsation of the reading eye. Severed from the rhythm of the spoken word, doubly removed from the organic rhythm of a line traced by an organic fluency of the hand, most of our books are dreary tenements of words badly in need of rhythmical accents — accents which exist in the spoken language.

To give a book unity, the graphic form of communication must

## GYÖRGY KEPES

match in character the ideas of which it is the vehicle. A book can have an integrated personality — its outward face can correspond to its inner content. Today the individuality of the book is only the individual graphic signature of its designer. A genuine face, that is a true unity of spirit, can only be attained by translating verbal content into its appropriate visual terms.

The laws of visual perception are conditioned by the visual habits of the time. Visual communication can be efficient only if it adapts itself to the new landscape and the new psychology of contemporary man. Book design, to be efficient, must make significant adaptations to the contemporary scene.

Machines, motorcars, airplanes, fast-racing trains, flickering light displays, shopwindows, street scenes, motion pictures, television have become common features of the contemporary scene. Together with the new richness of light effects from artificial light sources, the complex dimensions of the landscape with the skyscrapers and their intricate spatial pattern above, and the subways underneath, they give an incomparably greater speed and density to visual experience than any previous environment has ever presented. There is very little time now for perception of unessential details. The duration of the visual impressions is too short. Contemporary man's visual habit underwent a new transformation and developed idioms of simplicity, forcefulness, and structural lucidity. Our vision, to be efficient, learned to see fundamental relationships.

This tendency toward simplicity and precision is further reinforced by certain psychological needs of man living today. We do not see passively; the images we form in our minds are not simple mirrorings of what is outside. We rather see what we are looking for. Our drives, purposes, are guiding our ways of perceiving. Industrial production introduced new objects, machines and machine-made objects. They were made with utmost precision and control dictated by clearly recognized and respected functional needs, utility and economy. In a confusing world around and within, these things appeared as the only man-made object of perfection and logic. The mechanical functional clarity of the machine, the perfect

## *function in modern design*

harmony of the parts and the unmistakable clear relationships were like an oasis for men searching logic and order in life. Clarity, precision, economy are compelling values in a world suffocating in the fight of cross-purposes. It is not by chance that the most commonly appreciated aesthetic values are in the designs of a motorcar, or airplane, or fountain pen. Visual communication forms, to be efficient in their appeal, have to utilize these qualities of straightforwardness of the visual patterns.

Fitness to function has also another implication. The logic of design is synonymous with economy of design. In the evolution of production, particularly since the industrial age, the division of labor and the functional coördination of unit performances gained increasing significance. Although at present this principle dangerously wounds the integrity of the individual, its essential sense is unquestionable. Today, when a rich range of new vehicles of communications is emerging, it is worthwhile to reconsider the meaning of the distribution of labor. It seems to be essential to understand what form of communication can best fulfill certain aspects of messages. Motion-picture photography and television become major factors in our life. For the time being, they hardly have their proper areas of effective operation. Only recently serious concerns were voiced by leaders of the book industry about the dangerous impact of television on the book industry. Creative thinkers are needed who could guide the proper problems to the proper agents and develop the appropriate distribution of function among the new and old forms of visual communication. There is also chance for a cross-fertilization of ideas, techniques, idioms. It is very possible that book design will benefit greatly from the montage technique of motion pictures as well as from the idioms of television.

Assuming that book design will meet all these and other demands of functional performance and thus will better fill its function, in truly contemporary terms, there are still some distant hopes for meeting also those deeper functions which are anchored in the deepest human needs. What are, then, those aspects of book design

## GYÖRGY KEPES

which go beyond the mere economy of production and efficiency in utilitarian performance?

Within an ever-increasing wealth of products, man himself became worn out, incapable of benefiting from his labors. Limited to a conveyor belt, he rarely feels the joy of creation. Unable to encompass the metamorphosis of things which take shape under the work of his hands, he forfeits the sense of accomplishment, the unity and thus the harmony in the doing, which might give him true satisfaction. Limited to the mechanical details of one or another singular movement, within the complicated cogwheels of the production machinery, he gradually loses those sensibilities which are the guarantors of his perceiving the richness of life. Drained of the nourishment which is essential to his growing to full human stature, he loses the measure and meaning of his deepest aspirations. Through mass production, which could only be achieved through mechanization, man's sensibility, emotional unity, has been killed or at least dulled and deformed. It is not accidental that in most of our free activities we don't participate with the full vigor of our total self. It is significant that in our arts, or rather in the appreciation of art — movies, the radio, television pictures, and, yes, books — we are passive men, lazy men, armchair onlookers. We perceive only a small fraction of the most vital aspects of life. We do not live any form of creative experience in a total response; we hardly ever participate with our whole sensuous being through eyes, ears, and kinesthetic pleasure. In the age of specialization we also became specialized in our experiences, and have lost the vigor which comes from the coördination of many ranges and levels.

To counteract this shallowness, to achieve a fuller man, we must do everything which helps to rescue and may redevelop man's dulled sensibilities. It is the major function of every man-made design to fit the true purpose of man and help him to perceive life as an integrated, balanced flow of activity in which his sensuous, emotional, and ideational levels coexist harmoniously. Organic human experiences must be juxtaposed against the mechanization of man,



## *function in modern design*

which pushes and presses him so that he will fit into the rhythm of the machine.

We must find those feelings in which and through which man's bonds to nature and to man can again be experienced. Creative experience, man's faculty to grasp vital organic coherence, is the yeast of the potentially fuller man. Only art, the joy in creative doing and perceiving, will help to bring back the needed sensibilities which can safeguard man from being further twisted away from his better nature. Every man-made object, every element of the man-created environment, will fit to its deepest function if it is a form of art, if it has unity, proportion, rhythm, and living symmetry.

What book design ought to aim for is a rhythmical quality conditioned by appropriate technical and utilitarian limitations. The act of producing our means to survive, the search for economy of effort, led man to rhythm, and thus to art. Occupational movements articulated to perfection gave birth to something else which was broader and richer than its origin. The sweep of the sickle, the meeting of the hammer with the anvil, the play of the fingers on clay in the process of making a pot, became dance, song, and ornament. Rhythm, the coördination of individual motions into an economy of performance, became more than its origin; it became a symbol of unity between body and mind, material and tools. It became an expression of interdependence within the individual or within a team of workers. And it can help book design reach its final functional form.

There is a new challenge in contemporary thinking and vision, a challenge that springs from the need of a total reorientation of man's language. A transformation of vision and thinking is taking place. We are moving toward broader idioms of simultaneity, of transparency, of interpenetration. These are displacing linear perspective in thinking and seeing. Contemporary painting, architecture, design, writing, and physical science are developing powerful new methods to reach this new operational area. Transparency in painting, interpenetration of internal and external space in build-ings point toward an even more dynamic visual language of simul-

## GYÖRGY KEPES

taneity. Printed communication has its own contribution to make to this new language, its new place to take in the new world of vision.

Let there be coöperation among those whose work makes the final form of a book: the author, the book designer, the printer, the photoengraver. How can a designer shape the rhythm and personality of a book when he hardly has the chance to become acquainted with its contents? How can he synchronize his form ideas when he does not know the problems the other collaborators are facing? A collaborative team could, in a free give-and-take relationship, develop an integrated spirit, a genuine craftsmanship on a twentieth-century level. Only such coöperation can stimulate the writer to consider the book in its true terms. It can help him to think, to write with consideration of visual rhythms in the development of a new, richer, multi-dimensional literary art that affects human sensibility on every level of sensuous experience.

Designs for printing are, by sheer quantity, an important factor of our visual environment. Printed designs inevitably condition man's sensibilities, for better or worse. It is our task to be alert to what is here involved and to make our designs fit their total purposes.

If graphic forms are made to function for man's welfare in their fullest range, we may hope that we will one day fulfill our obligation and help make truth truth again and not a slogan. We can create genuine forms, rather than apply formulas. Thus we can bring back the truest meaning of tradition, which is to realize in terms of today a living continuity with the genuine values of the past.

## *university press book design*

### P. J. CONKWRIGHT

FOR A LONG TIME UNIVERSITY PRESS BOOKS HAVE BEEN LOOKED upon as somehow a different breed from other kinds of books. This is a wrong view. Most of them are sold in the same markets and bear the same booksellers' discounts and authors' royalty as other books. They will break when you open them too vigorously; they will soil and fade when you treat them too roughly; and they will bleed when you cut them too closely — the same as other books. I wish they were different from other books. I wish they could be printed more evenly, on better paper, with duller and blacker ink, bound with better material, and stamped with a leaf or ink that would endure for generations. But in spite of careful rearing, university press books have acquired most of the physical vices of other books.

University press titles are good and not-so-good, like those of other publishers. Some of them have an extremely high blood count; some are almost scandalously virile. Twenty years ago Christopher Morley wrote an introduction to a university press catalogue in which he said that it had long been a sadness of his that the general republic of readers should hear so little of the thrilling books being published by the learned print shops. He exclaimed, "Why should the Professors have all the fun? Such books as Professor Tinker's edition of Boswell's letters is surely just as rowdy a book as *Trader Horn*!" He observed that it was "no longer necessary for a university press to publish its works almost as surreptitiously as *The President's Daughter*, or Clara Tice's drawings for Pierre Louÿs. Since the public has always a huge appetite for being scandalized, it is only fair to say that the works of scholars and scientists are always much more engagingly candid than even the pinkest of tabloids."



## P. J. CONKWRIGHT

The Princeton University Press has recently published a book entitled *The Court Wits of the Restoration* which is pretty strong stuff — a scholarly companion volume to *Forever Amber*, with bibliography and notes. This press has considered republishing the Earl of Rochester's poems, too, but I think Peter Beilenson has beat us to that — I believe under the imprint of the Blue Behinded Ape. Real scholarship is never limited to prescribed subjects, and the main business of university presses is scholarship. More people are discovering all the time that scholarly searches for truth can be high adventure, and more exciting than fiction.

The function of university press books, as with all books, is to communicate the author's ideas. (This statement has become a platitude because it is so obviously true.) A book's fitness to purpose depends on how well the author's ideas are communicated. One way to check a book's fitness to purpose is to conduct a little opinion survey shortly after the book has been published. It's rarely profitable to ask the author's opinion about the fitness of his book for several months, because authors naturally have some parental blindness at the birth of each little bundle of manuscript. But when the book is grown, and has gone out into the world and sinned or gained glory, the author usually can and will more properly appraise the fitness of his book. This appraisal can be helpful to the designer, either in new editions of the same book or in new books of like nature.

This polling method should not be leaned on too heavily. But technical and scientific books, such as university presses concentrate on, should not be tackled by a designer or left unwatched after publication without some consultation with the author or some of his colleagues. Certain unusual sizes and shapes may make them fitter books, and such things as extraordinary margins may have an obviously useful purpose in books of this kind.

It is possible to design a good looking scientific book without consultation with any scientist, or without any knowledge of science. But the looks of the book, especially the parts that so attract us at first — binding design and title page — may be only skin

deep. It is also probable that the scientist himself, with a small amount of plagiarism, could design a book that might have a homely mug outside, but would have a heart of gold inside. With more knowledge of the science, and the needs of the scientist, it's reasonable that the designer can lay out a more useful book.

If this is true for books of science, it is also true for books of art, or history. The more of the subject of the text a designer knows, the more likely he is to turn out a fit book. One idea of how to design a book is something like this: First, the designer reads the manuscript and masters it, which gets him into the spirit of the work; then, after quiet meditation, his cerebrum begins to turn in harmony with the text, and after a spell of this up comes a graphic interpretation of the author's message, exactly in tune with it. This isn't always the way it works. Some years ago, at the University of Oklahoma, I was given a book to design. The title of it was *The Philosophy of Our Uncertainties*, with an explanatory subtitle "The Uncertainty of Our Philosophies." After wrestling with it for days I thought, but not very positively, that I had finally comprehended a couple of sentences. Just how do you go about designing a book you don't understand? The way I did it was to fool with some ornaments, which is about the worst thing I could have done. The result was a series of round and square interlacing units, badly done, and signifying nothing. The best thing to do in such a situation is to go down a well-traveled road in broad daylight, and whistle.

University press books are generally meant to be works of more than ephemeral value. Some of them are advertised as "definitive" — a much-used word also employed by other publishers. A "definitive" work on any subject means: This is it; everything is here said about this subject that needs to be said. And the implication is that everything is said that will ever need to be said. Scholarly books of this kind, that are referred to frequently, need to be made more sturdily, and need certain basic fitnesses that novels, or books of more temporary interest, do not need.

One basic fitness scholarly books should have is an ability to lie

## P. J. CONKWRIGHT

open flat, when on a scholar's table, on his lap, or wherever he may have pushed it to one side on his workbench. It's disrupting to him, and highly annoying, to be forced to mark his place with an old paperweight or his spectacle case. Another basic fitness, I think, is that all sides be trimmed flush; it's much easier to riffle the pages to the required text. In an untrimmed book the pages go by in lumps of four or eight at a time.

The binding should be sturdy, and the title on the spine stamped durably. This is a hard thing to accomplish these days. In the Princeton University library there is an open shelf containing a wide selection of the most popular current books. This shelf, and all shelves like it that are extensively used, are sad things for any conscientious book-builder to behold. Broken hinges, faded stampings — some so bad as to be wholly unreadable. Some books with as few as five or six lendings are almost complete wrecks. A few, somewhat more sturdily constructed, after as many as twenty lendings are pretty bloody, but still doing business. The worst possible cloth to use on scholarly books is light colored unfinished cloth. My observation is that dark, smooth cloth, stamped with genuine gold, is the best binding material. But it will pay any designer, I believe, to study carefully the open shelves in university and public libraries.

There has been a lot said and written about type faces and their fitness to certain purposes. Within certain small limits I think some type faces can suggest or be more in harmony with the spirit of the text than other faces. Some faces look poetic, and some look very prosy indeed. Some look like go-getters, and some look indolent. Some do suggest the past, and some are obviously callow youths. But this sort of conjuring of moods and periods with type can easily be pushed to the point of nonsense.

Some types, especially the square-serif and the sans-serif varieties, are so disconcerting to the eyes of a scholar that they should never be used for the text in books designed for him. Others have distinct, but less obvious personalities; some of these are aristocrats with long and honorable lineage — such as a few of the Caslons.

## *university press book design*

Some have aristocratic names but have questionable origins — such as the machine-set Bodoni's. There are other personality faces available on all type-setting machines that have quality in their own right, like Centaur, Caledonia, and Weiss, to mention but one from each of the composition machine companies. These personality faces can be used in printing scholarly books to advantage, and perhaps with some subtlety, in communicating the author's ideas.

There is another group of types, lacking personality but still used in an enormous amount of printing in this country, especially in books of reference — dictionaries, encyclopedias, anthologies, science books, and the like. These are the numbered types: Modern No. 1, 4, 8, and so on, and Old Style No. 1, 3, 7, and so on. Included in these no-personality types is Century, which is still used extensively. I think in most cases one of the personality types would be just as suitable for these reference books, and would provide a slight relish to those who are able to distinguish the difference. But the Old Styles and Moderns have communicated an incalculable amount of knowledge in their lifetime, and have a vast potency of life in them yet.

What is more important for the scholar than personality type is clear, readable type. Scholars as a lot are uncomplaining fellows; they have endured much and have learned to focus their eyes (sometimes through triple lenses) on smaller type than they should be forced to do. As a charitable principle, it is good, I think, to relieve the eyes of scholars wherever possible.

There used to be a day when letterpress was the supreme process. Advocates of letterpress still claim superiority because of the greater intensity of black ink, and the sparkle caused by sinking type into paper just the right amount. However, in recent years some offset work has become so good that it measures up to all but the very best letterpress. The choice, then, between letterpress and offset, is entirely one of cost. Where illustrations and charts are especially numerous, offset has proved more economical. This is also true where elaborate diacritical marks and special symbols are abundant and varied throughout the text. It would be prohibitively



## P. J. CONKWRIGHT

costly to make matrices of large numbers of symbols, but it is relatively simple to draw them on reproduction proofs.

Although university presses in recent years have aimed a considerable number of their books at more popular markets than they did in the past, and have succeeded amazingly, there are still a large number of titles that cannot hope to sell more than a few hundred copies. Some of these have a potential market of fewer than five hundred. Since the text of these works may often be of genuine importance, no conscientious university press publisher can reject them solely on the basis of potential sale, as a commercial publisher would be justified in doing. Titles of this kind have to be reproduced, but in a cheaper way. The only answer as yet is typewritten composition, done by Vari-type or similar machines, and reproduced by offset. The quality of such typewritten copy is improving all the time; and it needs more improvement. At present it is not comparable to type, but because of considerably reduced costs it serves a very useful function in university printing. These typewritten books could be dressed up considerably, at small cost, by using reproduction proofs of type for cover, titles, and headings.

Is printing an art or a craft? Theodore DeVinne was one of the most competent craftsmen of printing on this continent. In his day he was also considered the master of the art of printing. His style was to the public taste and his waiting list of customers was crowded. His knowledge of printing methods, tricks of the trade, and printing history was encyclopedic. He went beyond the horizon in knowledge and was very instrumental in developing coated paper and the "kiss impression" so dear to pressmen's hearts. He did a large amount of printing for universities, and set the style for their publications as well as for the trade in general. The decorated types of the 1880's, with their excessively thin hairlines, delicate shadings, and floating tendrils were mighty hard to keep in good condition, but DeVinne insisted that broken letters, even with the tiniest defect, be ruthlessly tossed out. In 1896 he printed a large sesquicentennial memorial book for Princeton, which contained

scores of exceedingly delicate types. I have yet to discover a badly broken letter, or over-inked or under-inked printing in that book. This is craftsmanship of the highest order. Yet DeVinne's influence on printing design today is practically nothing.

Was his printing a craft or an art? What is the difference between craft and art in printing? My definition of this somewhat controversial subject is this: The craft of printing is knowledge of printing with skill. The art of printing is knowledge of printing made beautiful with skill. The general assumption is that it's a matter of individual taste whether a particular piece of printing is considered beautiful or not. But few people really have individual taste. Almost all of us are led in our taste by someone else. So often we are led to think a thing is beautiful because someone else we respect thinks it's beautiful. It's rare to find a critic like Emerson, who was the first eminent figure to publicly acclaim the greatness of Walt Whitman when that wild poet was considered everywhere as nothing but a Brooklyn bum. It's easy to follow now and say that Whitman is great.

A strong-minded critic of art who expresses forceful and convincing opinions can gather converts by the roomful, whether the converts understand the art or not. And with too much zeal, a convert without understanding is likely to move his belief into the realm of faith, where no other convincing argument can touch it. If enough zealots can be gathered together a new public taste is born, and a new period of art begins. I'm sure this process has been happening over and over again, ever since the first cave was decorated.

William Morris was a strong-minded art critic, and he began a new typographic movement. His principal doctrine was: We are not sufficient unto ourselves; we must go back to the beginnings of printing and pick up the art all over again. He was the Messiah. Other forceful disciples took his doctrine and wrote new gospels. The two most forceful early disciples in this country were D. B. Updike and Bruce Rogers. They soon established denominations of their own. Others followed and some were strong enough to set up camps of their own. Since then there have been a number of

P. J. CONKWRIGHT

diverse movements. But the public typographic taste of today, in general, is made up of the parts of the Morris rebellion.

No doubt tastes will change. That's a natural law. But any change that attempts to be sufficient to itself, that tries to cut the blood stream with the past, is in my opinion doomed to a short life.



## *trade book design*

### W. A. DWIGGINS

I HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE ASSIGNMENT OF DISCUSSING "FUNCTION" in connection with the design of trade edition books. But it requires to be said that my knowledge of trade edition books isn't quite as extensive as it might seem, for the reason that practically all my trade edition books have been made for a publisher who is liberal enough in his attitude toward sales to leave me alone, so I haven't been faced by the need to solve one part of the problem, that is, the part concerned with making a "package" that would be sure fire with the customer.

For there are two parts to the question of function in trade edition book design — two distinct sets of directives. And the strange thing about it is that the two parts are in conflict with each other. So it comes about that the designer's job is not just a simple following out of the dictates of function — finding out what the object is for, what its purpose is, and making it fit that purpose. His job is to reconcile the two conflicting elements of function — to balance up their demands and make peace between them. One element asks for an article to be used — for a tool for reading — this you may label the "use" function. The other element demands a sales "package" — an object to catch the customer's eye and persuade him to buy — the "selling" function. And, though you may not be willing to believe it, those two demands do not usually combine to make the best kind of product for either use *or* sales.

You can demonstrate the bearing of this conflict upon design by thinking about simple elements. Take the raw material, just a simple page, and ask yourself, What is the function of this or that particular item of the design? Take a running head, for instance, and ask yourself, What is the function of a running head?

From the "use" point of view a running head is an *indexing*

## W. A. DWIGGINS

device — a means for finding your way about in a book. You have been reading a chapter with the heading, "A Visit to Rome." Well, a glimpse of that phrase in the running head tells you where you were in the book. Dates in the running heads are a practical help in some kinds of books.

A book has to move out of its publishing house. If it doesn't sell it dies, and it doesn't matter how good and useful a tool you have made out of it and how well it answers to the demands of the "use" function. So you have to weave in with the "use" demands an immediate consideration of the "sales" part of function. How do the selling requirements affect the design of a running head?

Many designers think of a running head, I am sure, as just an architectural detail — like an ornamental molding at the top of a wall. They do not think of it as useful, they think of it as ornamental. And very often people with only this decorative aim in mind put the title of the book on both pages — just repeat it, on and on. Which strikes one as quite unfunctional from the "use" angle, because it seems to me that if a person doesn't know what book he is reading the head doesn't help him much, and it is a little foolish to stop him on every page and say, "This is So and So," "This is So and So," over and over again.

Now, the "sales" part of function by-passes all of these considerations we have been discussing. It demands that every page be made striking and novel and conventionally beautiful at all costs. The Sales Department does not see your book as something to be *read* — it sees it as something to be *sold*.

Under this necessity to make the book novel and startling, so it will sell, you seize upon little elements like running heads and primp them up with neckties and ribbons and things that running heads oughtn't to have (because that makes them conspicuous, and they oughtn't to be conspicuous, because it takes your eyes off the reading). Folios, too, are easy spots for the ornamentalist to seize upon. He puts brackets around them, and wings on the brackets, and curls on the ends of the wings. . . I have done all this — in my efforts to ride two horses with a foot on each.

## *trade book design*

Under these circumstances your hope is that you can contrive a running head that will ornament the page *without impairing the "use" of the head* — the use that we have been talking about. Sometimes it can be done. One way that I have tried is to get a little typographical difference between the two heads — maybe caps and small caps on one side and italic on the other. Sometimes the design of the typeface itself provides enough variety to be ornamental.

The usual way to manage a running head is to put the title of the book on the left page and the chapter title on the right — which serves both use and sales.

The kind of text it is gives you hints about what kind of running head will serve the reader best. If you are telling him a fast story and everything is moving rapidly you certainly do not want to force him to read a running head into the text and get all tangled up — when what he wants to do is to hurry on to the startling event immediately following. I would leave running heads off of a story of that kind. On the other hand, if you want to stop a fellow on every page and jolt him maybe a monotonously repeated running head (if highly ornamental) is the way to do it.

There is one part of the design of our trade edition book that is comforting, because in this part you can forget about the "use" as an aid to the reader, and let "sales" operate to its heart's content. I mean the jacket. The prettier you can make the jacket and the more startling and novel, the better it will be for sales. Here is the place for allure and all the candy-box qualities that the Sales Department yearns for.

About Period design. . . We all love the old, we printers. They did such fine things before we came along that we can't help harking back to them and trying to get some of their quality into the things we do. Each of us has his own pet moment in printing and no one of us can quite escape the temptation to work out his designs in the style of his favorite time.

But . . . if we are to design our books — our trade editions of

## W. A. DWIGGINS

today — on a basis of function — if the text is presented to us to be read *now*, in this year — we have to put those old loves aside. Our design is *contemporary*. It can't help being so. You can't copy and repeat successfully even the most beautiful typography of another time — because you do not live in that time.

The fact that we are doing a contemporary job brings up questions about quality of materials and standards of workmanship. The kind of book I am talking about, you remember, is not a scholarly text and not a book for library use particularly — it is a *trade edition*. One of the facts about these trade edition books is that they are made to be read and then laid aside — either given away or sold to the second-hand book dealer, or junked. The books that our forefathers used to put on their shelves as a treasure, the books that were made to last forever — paper, binding, good for five hundred years — that kind of thing does not enter at all into the function of a trade edition book. You are making something a little more permanent than a newspaper, and not much longer-lived than a magazine. And I think that this point of the book's short life has got to be considered as an essential part of its scheme of design. This will strike some of you as a betrayal of the standards of the book art, but I can't help seeing it as an inevitable consequence of designing functionally — of finding out what a thing is for, how it will be used, what its purpose is, and then making it fit that purpose. Our trade edition bindings, for instance: Aided by the machine (and limited to one single manner of making by the machine) these covers and bindings are excellent mechanically. Try to break a book down and you will see. But, if you look at these books as I do — as *Ephemera* — does it strike you that their covers are *functionally* in line with the purpose to be served? Functionally they are *too* good. They don't need to last so long. Their cost is all out of proportion to the work they do. It is like packaging butter for the market in quarter-inch steel. . . Might not the money spent on their gratuitous durability better go into brightening up the pages inside, with bits of ornament or illustration sketchily done? "*Ephemera*" need not be tedious and dull — they ought to scintillate during their



## *trade book design*

brief life! Trade editions ought to be cased more simply, more temporarily — in paper, maybe (but *not* in paper stamped to imitate cloth!). . . Anyway, it is up to the designer, be he Functionalist, to invent a new kind of binding for trade edition books, simpler, gayer, functionally more in keeping with the length of time such books last and the way they are used.

Now, this Modernist matter — you can't talk very long about art nowadays without getting into a discussion of Modernist art — the Modernist influence in printing has more to do at present with advertising "art work" than with books, but it is influencing book design too.

To my mind the Modernist effort, when it comes to books, has to be kept under control. A book page is a highly conservative affair. The handling of its component parts has been established practice for such a long time that you can't jump out of the familiar usage suddenly without mixing the reader up. You can't turn pages sideways, and hope for the reader to follow your gymnastics; you can't put all the details of a page on one side and leave large, meaningless spaces on the other side, and things like that — it is too confusing. Such things are usually done with nothing but novelty in view. Usually the fellow who designs that way is not thinking about getting the book read at all. He has his own aims and theories about the function of a printed text, I am quite aware of that; he is thinking, perhaps, about creating an emotional overtone over the words that will drive their theme deep into your subconsciousness, by startling manipulation of space, by dramatic pattern.

Manipulation of space is a highly important part of typographic design as any book-maker knows, and we all work pattern into our pages. It is fair for you to experiment. You can ignore "tradition." You can change the margins, move the type rectangle about — and *if you are in harmony with the music of space*, you may come out with something fine! But the full blown Modernist necessity to strike *only* for dramatic pattern and startling novelty can't quite be counted as playing fair with the function of a book — or with the reader!

## *evaluation*

### CARL PURINGTON ROLLINS

THOSE WHOSE MEMORY STRETCHES BACK INTO PAST TIMES will remember an amorphous feminine garment, the predecessor of the Hoover apron, which was known as the "Mother Hubbard." A wit once described it as "covering everything and touching nothing." This definition seems to me to fit the topic with which I am going to struggle. The word "Evaluation" standing alone on the printed sheet means little or nothing, yet under its billowing protection almost anything can be said. It is a tough task to plunge head-first into what depths and currents may lurk beneath the innocent surface of my subject.

It is well to point out that the book is not, strictly speaking, a work of graphic art, nor is it an example of creative art. Printing itself is but a craft, and the book is an example of craftsmanship; although as printing may have sensitivity and artistic consciousness, so the book, as the final effort of the printing craft, may possess artistic qualities of a high order. The very complexity of the object which we call a book, the numerous elements which it combines, suggest manufacture. It is a conglomeration of wood fiber, disintegrating and bleaching chemicals, lamp black, oily vehicle, cotton threads, animal glue, paste, glair, and gold foil, or their even more debased equivalents. This messy mixture is a far cry from the simplicity of the codex. Except in rare instances, the book is not designed to accord with any of the symmetries, either dynamic or static. It is too fat or too thin, too long or too short. The cased book is too fragile, and likely to get out of shape. The print is often hard on the eye, and, finally, as a collector of dust and dirt the book has few rivals. Having thus disposed of the book as a manufactured product rather than as an object of art, let us see if there are devices by which the relative value of books may be measured.

The function of the book is to purvey information or entertainment in such a concise and simple manner, in respect to its physical appearance, that the average intelligent person can readily read it. But as the world has long since decided that any artifact worthy of permanent preservation and respect must possess both use and comeliness in its adaptation to function, so the book must conform to the same obligation. Sense and beauty must be conjoined for a harmonious whole.

To evaluate a properly functional book is a complicated matter, involving many details of production, but a simple example may indicate how function influences printing. The example I have in mind is not, perhaps, a book; but the railroad timetable is made up of folded and stitched sheets, and will serve my purpose.

The Boston and Maine Railroad is not a "through line," but rather a sort of terminal road; the longest run within its territory is less than two hundred miles. As a result, the B. & M. timetable is a series of almost isolated schedules. The typography is adjusted to suit this situation, and much care has been taken to make the printing comely to the eye and convenient to use. In the case of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, a quite different situation exists. The main line from Chicago to Los Angeles is over twenty-two hundred miles, and is an important continental thoroughfare. The timetable reflects this. The first pages are typically arranged as follows: at the top is a simplified map of the route of the train described below; single and double track are indicated, with the major stations; then follows a brief schematic timetable, a list of equipment, and a statement of important connecting trains. Detailed timetables for these through trains follow in the body of the folder. In addition, there is also a diagram of altitudes and other relevant information. The typography is cleverly handled. In evaluating the two timetables one may say that each for its purpose is very well done; the B. & M. folder is the handsomer, the Santa Fe easier to read.

I have selected these particular examples because it is possible to compare them on their merits. One does not have to go behind the



## CARL PURINGTON ROLLINS

actual facts, since the form of the Santa Fe table is traditional and there is nothing to be gained by bringing older editions into the assessment. The B. & M. table is improved over its predecessors, but the general form is similar. If one attempts to compare modern books with each other, however, one meets a different situation. One may compare modern books, but inevitably the question arises, how do they compare with books of the past five hundred years? And no proper evaluation of today's book can be made exclusively on its own merits. How then is one to find a basis for evaluation?

I believe that this basis may be found by combining two inquiries and by studying books from two angles. One way is to take the books of a given period, such as the incunabula period or the German books of the seventeenth century. The other way is to compare successive editions of the same book, such as the *Canterbury Tales*, the Bible, or Euclid's geometry.

While the function of the book in the early days of printing was the same as now, the conditions surrounding the printing and reading of books differed. The differences between the reading public, the printing press, the type, the housing of books in the fifteenth and in the twentieth century do not need to be elaborated here. The approach to the study will be that of the satisfactory fulfillment of functional requirements. Did the early printed books meet the requirements of their readers, and if they did not, in what way did they fail to do so? We may conclude that the Psalter of 1457 was printed in very large type because the churches were not adequately lighted and the priests were myopic. We may also conclude that many of the early printed books must have been extremely difficult to read by persons of sound eyesight in any light. Jenson's *Pliny* is easy to read even today, while Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum* of 1481, while formidable to modern eyes, was probably as easy reading for the fifteenth-century scholar as the *Columbia Encyclopedia* is to us. Or one may compare the books of the Plantin press with those of John Day, or the Estiennes; or again, the English books of the seventeenth century with those being printed in North America at the same time. Or even more instructively, one may

compare the early Spanish books with their contemporaries in other European countries.

Such comparisons are illuminative, and give one a juster sense of the relative importance of modern work. Even more enlightening is the comparison of successive editions of standard texts. The most obvious is the Bible, the most-printed book in our field. Primarily the Bible was a book meant to be read from a standing desk; and down to our own time it has been so printed. The Mainz Bible of about 1456, the Lyons edition of 1559, the Oxford of 1727, the Brattleboro of 1818, the Rogers-Oxford of 1931, make a fascinating comparative study. Even the degraded self-pronouncing, divinity-circuit, red-under-gold-edges edition should be compared with Isaiah Thomas' editions, and the *Modern Reader's Bible*. Such comparisons are not merely studies in the antique; they form the basis for evaluation of the work of the present, and will prevent snap judgments and such appraisals as result from concentrated interest in the current modes. There are no real breaks with the past, only apparent ones, and to evaluate properly any work of art or craftsmanship one must envisage the whole field, not in minute detail but in a general way.

Such a comparative study as I have suggested is by no means meant to imply that all good work was done in the past. H. G. Wells has an amusing story of attending a meeting of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and as the evening passed becoming convinced that everything in the world stopped about 1880. As he wandered in this dead world down Park Street, he saw in Smith & McCance's window a copy of Dickinson's *A Modern Symposium*, and suddenly realized that the world did *not* cease to revolve in 1880. So there is good work produced yesterday and today, and will be tomorrow. A catholicity of taste is necessary for the proper evaluation of a book — a firm knowledge of the past, and a sense of what is desirable and possible in the present. Such a catholicity does not mean that prejudices are not highly desirable. It is the difference of opinion which makes horse races, as Pudd'nhead Wilson observed, and some critics prefer a Kelmscott

## CARL PURINGTON ROLLINS

Press book with its British assertiveness to such a book as the Abbé de Saint-Non's *Voyage Pittoresque* with its subtler charm. But the point I would make is that each of those books has a very high standing for its time and kind. Such comparisons are necessary to that process of evaluation which tries to set standards of taste in the printed book.

## 2 FORM

*structure and shape*



# *black in the visual arts*

## PAUL RAND

TABOOS AND PREJUDICES HAVE LONG CREATED LIMITING barriers to experimentation and to meaningful work in the graphic arts. In this paper I should like to attack one particular prejudice — that against the color black.<sup>1</sup>

Vowels: black A, white E, red I, green U, blue O,  
Someday I shall name the birth from which you rise:  
A, a black furry corset of loud flies  
Boiling where the cruel stench flows. . . \*

In these lines the French poet, Rimbaud, uses the word black to describe and symbolize carnality, death, and decay. This traditional association of the color black with death and sin is long standing and has led to the widespread conviction in both art and lay circles that black is depressing and sinister and therefore, if possible, must be avoided. As a result, the power and usefulness of black has been limited or misunderstood. During this century many individual artists, architects, and designers have rebelled against the conventional use and misuse of black. However, the prejudices against this color are still sufficiently strong to require a discussion of the properties of black and a vigorous defense of its many virtues.

In nature, black and its companion color white are dramatically juxtaposed in the contrast between day and night. The monotony of uninterrupted darkness or light would be intolerable. Black in the trunks of trees subtly sets off the brilliance of green or autumn-colored leaves. Throughout nature we find the equivalent of black and white in shadow and light — there are caves and canyons as

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that it is impossible to discuss black without mentioning or implying white, grays, and dark umbers the greater part of the time.

\* By permission of the translator, Muriel Rukeyser. Sergei M. Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942) p. 90.



## PAUL RAND

well as fields and meadows. Man as a rule does the least violence to nature when he uses either natural materials, such as stone or wood, or black and white for the objects he places out of doors. Natural colors are integrated, white participates by reflecting its environmental color, and black modestly provides perfect background for the riotous nature colors. Certainly those people who observed with pleasure the old-fashioned black steam engine wind its way agreeably through green fields and forests, have watched with a kind of horror the orange or blue streamliner that now streaks garishly across the countryside.

The decidedly ambivalent nature of black has been understood in daily use. In the east and southwest of the United States and in Europe black is by far the most popular color for pleasure vehicles, but it is also the color of the hearse. In clothes black is the color of tragedy, mourning. At the same time it is the color of elegance and of sensuous enjoyment in the conventionally "sexy" black lingerie.

If we look further into the psychological significance of black, it is linked with mystery, with death which is unknowable, with night which is full of hidden things — of fear and magic.

In some countries black or near-black has been employed extensively in architecture and interior design. The color pattern of the Japanese house is based on the contrasting use of dark and light materials. Dark wood often delineates the basic structure of the house and separates it aesthetically from the light colored partition walls (*fusuma*) and floor mats (*tatami*).

The first of my illustrations (A) shows a building designed by Mies van der Rohe in which black is a crucial aesthetic factor. The structural members of this steel building are exposed and painted black. The effect of this is manifold: the structure is clearly defined, it is placed in dramatic contrast to the pale non-bearing brick walls, the bulk of its members is reduced making them appear light and delicate, great elegance is achieved without the use of expensive materials or decoration, and the restraint and restfulness of black makes the building a welcome oasis in the chaotic heart of the city.

## *black in the visual arts*

It is, of course, understood that like any color the value of black depends upon the manner in which it is used. Black will be lugubrious or bright and elegant depending on its context and form. Despite the successful use of black in Japan and in modern buildings and interiors there are still many people who deny black categorically.

A doctor writing on the use of color in interiors issues a grim warning against black: "This is the most dismal of all colors — it expresses all that is opposite to white."<sup>2</sup> Among these opposites he lists the grave, sin, and crime.

This type of blanket denunciation of a color completely ignores the relative nature of any color or form. Eisenstein writing about the film says: "Even within the limitations of a color-range of black and white . . . one of these tones not only evades being given a single 'value' as an absolute image, but can even assume absolutely contradictory meanings, dependent only upon the general system of imagery that has been decided upon for the particular film."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to illustrate this important point by the reversal of the role of black in relation to white in the two films *Old and New* and *Alexander Nevsky*. In the former, black signified things reactionary, outdated, and criminal, while white denoted happiness, life, and progress; whereas in *Alexander Nevsky* white was the color of cruelty, oppression, and death, and black, identified with the Russian warriors, represented heroism and patriotism. Eisenstein's response to the surprise and protest of the critics at this reversal of traditional symbolism is to cite *Moby Dick's* famous white whale — the reader will recall that the leprous, livid whiteness of this whale symbolized the world's monstrous and baffling evil.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, black (with some notable exceptions) was treated as a linear element or was associated with modeling and chiaroscuro. Kahnweiler in *The Rise of Cubism* says: "Since it was the mission of color to create the form as chiaroscuro, or light that had become perceivable, there was no

<sup>2</sup> Edward Podolsky, *The Doctor Prescribes Colors*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, pp. 151-152.

## PAUL RAND

possibility of rendering local color or color itself.”<sup>4</sup> Although Kahnweiler is referring to color in general, this statement applies very forcibly to black. In the twentieth century the possibilities of rendering color as a thing in itself and not primarily as a description of three dimensionality or “objectivated light,” have been rediscovered and exploited. Coincident with this trend, black has come into its own as a positive “plastic” value.

Among the many artists who have used black as a vital element in their work are Rouault, Braque, Miro, Léger, Arp, and Picasso. Beardsley, Masereel, and Posada, for example, have used it almost exclusively.

Arp, describing his painting reproduced here (B), says:

The black grows deeper and deeper darker and darker before me. It menaces me like a black gullet. I can bear it no longer. It is monstrous. It is unfathomable.

As the thought comes to me to exorcise and transform this black with a white drawing, it has already become a surface. Now I have lost all fear, and begin to draw on the black surface. I draw and dance at once, twisting and winding, a winding, twining soft white flowery round. A round of snakes in a wreath . . . white shoots this way and that. . .<sup>5</sup>

Arp understands that black alone and out of context is frightening, but he also knows its potency once it is formed and related.

Picasso’s “Guernica” (C) is eloquent testimony of the expressive power of black and its natural companions gray and white. Although we do not know the intentions of the artist, we can venture a few statements about the more obvious effects achieved by the substitution of black, white, and gray for the usual colors. The absence of the expected pictorial colors in this mural dramatizes the impact of the work. Furthermore, the lack of color implies all colors and forces the spectator’s imagination into activity by not telling him everything. The use of black, white, and gray is an understatement which makes possible and bearable the horror and violence of the imagery. At the same time, paradoxically, it empha-

<sup>4</sup> Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *The Rise of Cubism* (New York, 1949), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Arp, *On My Way* (New York, 1948), p. 52.

## *black in the visual arts*

sizes the brutally tragic imagery. It is probably beyond question that in this mural black and white play their ancient, symbolic roles. They are the raw unadulterated colors of the struggle between life and death.

For many centuries Chinese and Japanese painters have revered black as a color. In Japanese painting, black (*sumi*) is often the only color employed. The Japanese artist feels that "colors can cheat the eye but *sumi* never can; it proclaims the master and exposes the tyro."<sup>6</sup> One famous Japanese painter, Kubota, frequently expressed the wish that he might live long enough to be able to discard color altogether and use "*sumi* alone for any and all effects in paintings."<sup>7</sup>

In 1860 Chevreul wrote: "I do not know whether the use of black for mourning prevents the use of it, in numberless cases, where it would produce most excellent effects."<sup>8</sup> This quotation is as pertinent today as it was in the nineteenth century. Most graphic artists still shy away from black. When they are confronted with no alternative other than black, as in newspaper advertising or typography, they often accept it grudgingly and make little effort to discover or develop its potentialities. However, the psychological and physical qualities of black which have been discussed so far in relation to architecture and painting are equally significant for the graphic arts: advertising, cover design, and typography. I should like to illustrate this with several examples of the use of black in my own work.

The first illustration (D) is that of a photogram<sup>9</sup> for a cover design. Although this photogram is technically a light and shadow picture of an abacus, it is primarily a pattern of light and dark forms that seem to move vertically across the surface. Because the

<sup>6</sup> Henry P. Bowie, *On the Laws of Japanese Painting* (San Francisco, 1911), p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> M. E. Chevreul, *The Laws of the Contrast of Color* (London, 1883), p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> The photogram attained the status of a legitimate art form as a result of the pioneering work done by such people as Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy. Since then it has become increasingly popular in the graphic field.



## PAUL RAND

photogram is an abstraction the plastic qualities of the object become more important than its literal ones.

One of the prime sources of the visual power of the photogram lies in its black, white, and gray tonality. The photogram portrays a world of light, shadow, and darkness peopled by mysterious suggestive forms. The ability of these forms to stimulate varied and imaginative associations in the mind of the observer is menaced when the photogram is rendered in color. It may still be an effective work of art, but its peculiar evocative power may be destroyed.

The typographic example (E) is the cover of a catalogue for the Arensberg Collection which I recently designed for the Art Institute of Chicago. This cover is composed of a series of contrasts, the most important of which is that of black and white. Together black and white act in a certain sense as complementary colors. Chevreul described them as such because when they are juxtaposed each becomes more vivid. This, he says, is due to the fact that the bright light reflected by the white area nullifies the reflected light from the black area. This makes the black seem blacker and the white more brilliant.

The tension between black and white in the cover is heightened by opposing a large area of black to a small area of white. The contrast theme is carried out further by the drastic variation in the size of the letters. The roughness of the edges of the large A emphasizes the sharpness of those of the smaller A's, and the extreme diagonals of the letters are counteracted by the right angles of the book itself. But the most dramatic element of contrast lies in the use of black and white. Black and white lend dignity and elegance to the book cover, yet the vigorous contrast between the two gives it a poster-like quality.

Thomas B. Stanley in *The Technique of Advertising Production*<sup>10</sup> says: "While color has high attention value on short exposure, psychological tests indicate that the longer the time during which advertisements are examined, the more a black and white treat-

<sup>10</sup> New York (1947).



## *black in the visual arts*

ment tends to regain the attention lost at first glance to a color competitor."

Many advertisers and advertising artists feel that an advertisement becomes more colorful in proportion to the amount of color used in it. This is often untrue. Limited color when combined with black and white, which provide a brilliant but neutral background, is often far more effective than the use of many colors. Furthermore, the tendency of black and white to brighten and enliven other colors often makes any color used more articulate than when it is employed alone or combined with other primary or secondary colors. This is especially important in the case of dark colors.

In the advertisement for the Kaufman store reproduced here (F), I chose black and white combined with a strong light pink (shown in this reproduction as gray) for the reasons indicated in the above paragraph as well as others which I shall discuss.

Black was used for the large Easter egg primarily because of its ambivalent qualities. The combination of the egg form, which is a literal symbol of life and also suggests life by its swelling breathing shape, with black, the color of death, has shock value. A black egg is a paradox. Because of this the egg symbol is far more striking in black than if it were presented in its natural hue or in any other color.

Light pink which is a gay and playful color becomes increasingly effective when juxtaposed with black, again because of the associative paradox which their combination produces and because of the brightening action of black. Also the thin white lettering becomes livelier when set on a heavy contrasting background.

It is impossible to define cold without contrasting it with heat. It is impossible to comprehend life if death is ignored. Black is the color of death, but by virtue of this very psychological fact it is the color of life — it defines, contrasts, and enhances life, light, and color. It is through the artist's awareness of black as a polar element and consequently of its paradoxical nature that black as a color can be appreciated and effectively used. Nor must he forget that

## PAUL RAND

the neutrality of black makes it the common denominator of a multicolored world.

The necessity for the artist to free himself of traditional and conventional thought patterns if he is to create freely is obvious. Prejudices must be broken down, ruts avoided, and new paths or old forgotten ones explored if the artist is to perform one of his most important functions, that of broadening our visual world.

## *static and dynamic concepts*

### WALTER DORWIN TEAGUE

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT AMONG ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES the dead hand of tradition weighs more heavily today in the printing of books than on any other art — that is, wherever the printing of books is consciously practiced as an art. It has become a game played, like chess, within a very narrow and rigid set of rules, each having an immense weight of authority concentrated on its tiny point and all together vested with something like the solemn sanctity of the Decalogue.

Or perhaps it should be compared to a performance on the harpsichord: exquisite, precious, often charming and delightfully nostalgic, but lacking in robust resonance, orchestral variety, richness, and unexpected originality, and completely untouched by the chaotic, often savage spirit of these times. In the art of fine book design I know of no one conspicuously touched by the new light that shines in Matisse, Braque, or Picasso; in Gershwin, Shostakovich, or Khatchaturian; in Wright, Mies van der Rohe, or Le Corbusier.

Wherever a condition is so uniformly prevalent, there must be a reason for it and there probably is some justification. It is not hard to see why fine printing, at least in this country and England, has stood so completely outside the new currents that have animated the arts of painting, poetry, music, architecture, the drama, and the dance. Printing is not an art of expression with scope to attract the insurgent, creative spirits of these times — within its limits they cannot find room for the violent, often awkward but sometimes divinely inspired thrashing about that characterizes creative effort these days.

The printing of books is essentially a utilitarian craft which spends itself on small objects intended to serve a narrowly defined

## WALTER DORWIN TEAGUE

purpose, and executed by a substantially uniform technique. Books are intended to be read — at least in most instances; they are generally printed in ink on paper; it should be possible, in most cases, to hold them in the hand; they should not affront the reading habits of the public to which they are addressed. These are reasons enough to explain why we probably never will have a Picasso of fine printing, and why design in printing customarily varies within such narrow limits from the standards, often very beautiful and functionally satisfactory, established in the past.

But these reasons are not enough to justify the assumption that aesthetic values in books should consist of minute variations on well-established themes; or that a book cannot occasionally be readable and at the same time be a fresh, even exhilarating physical experience; or that fine printing should not reflect, like all other even minor arts, some trace of the peculiar spirit of these times.

Architecture too is a utilitarian art, and derives its most authentic values from that fact. Whenever its utilitarian *raison d'être* is overlaid by a crust of traditional appliqué which has lost even any emotional values for us today, it becomes trivial and abortive. All really creative architectural designers of this day recognize that truth, and express themselves by means of a vernacular which is not hidebound by Greek, Latin, or Gothic roots. It is true that architectural design deals with a wide variety of utilitarian objectives, and works on a huge range of scales, and has a fairly varied assortment of materials and techniques at its command. For these reasons it often can approach the magnificent and sometimes the sublime in its achievements, to a degree that printing in its more restricted scope can never hope to do.

But because the architect must build with massive materials and serve practical ends, he is earth-bound in a healthy sense. His foundations must go deep into the soil, his structures are anchored firmly to one spot; his works can be seen and touched, men can walk around and enter and pass through them. They must stand and be judged for long periods of time, through generations and even centuries. Therefore the builder is seldom able to indulge in

### *static and dynamic concepts*

the vagaries, the erratic unrestrained flights of fancy by which the painter or musician can relieve his neurotic tensions. The builder moves with the movements of the time in which he works, but he does so in a slower and less violent rhythm than we discover in the more facile arts. If the progress of the various arts should be plotted as curves on a graph, we should find that painting, music, poetry, especially today, would be represented by a series of wildly fluctuating gyrations, going to violent extremes on either side of a fairly consistent norm; architecture, by contrast, would move in a much smoother curve, much closer to the norm.

That is why, if we want to assess the deeply rooted, generally shared, and profoundly significant characteristics of any age, we shall find a better clue to them in its buildings than in what have been rightly called the more lively arts. For instance, Cézanne and van Gogh were creating brilliantly in obscurity at a time when Gérôme and Bouguereau were the official darlings of French painting; at the same time, architecture in Europe was completely dominated by the Beaux Arts and occupied itself solely with playing pretentious variations on ancient themes, while in this country the sterile "good taste" of Stanford White was mistaken for creative ability. By this test, we see that Gérôme and Bouguereau really represented their day much more accurately than the unknown innovators then painting; it was their classical inanities that people really loved; theirs were the kind of pictures the people liked to see among their potted palms and plush and fringes and tassels. Cézanne, van Gogh, and their tiny group were the seminal anticipations of a new age to come, wholly unrepresentative of their own.

But in the years that have elapsed since then, building has responded to the long ground swell that manifested its first stirrings in those few painters of the eighties and early nineties. Today we are building structures in which the paintings of Cézanne and van Gogh are utterly at home, while those of Gérôme and Bouguereau — if they were allowed to intrude, as they are not — would be revolting anachronisms. The path of architecture has swung around in a wide radius, changing its direction until it parallels the course of



## WALTER DORWIN TEAGUE

the more mobile arts, and all the arts of these times are showing that similarity, that kinship of preferences which has characterized every really creative epoch of the past. We see the same kind of forms, and the same relationship of forms, appearing in the structure of our contemporary music, our paintings, our buildings, our ballets, and the things we make for daily use.

When we look into the past and discover this similarity in all the expressions of a period, we call it the "style" of that period. As to the past, we accept this unanimity of thought and expression as natural to any well-integrated epoch. When it appears among ourselves it is more difficult to recognize, and often more difficult to accept. In fact, it is unwise for us to make any conscious effort to adopt or appropriate the style of our own times, even when we see its character clearly revealed, just as it is unwise to appropriate or imitate any style of the past no matter how clearly it may be defined. Style, if it is truly authentic, is never self-conscious; it is not the result of a deliberate intention; it is created and developed by individuals who are natural vehicles for the moods of their day, who speak its language because that is the speech that comes most easily to their tongues; authentic style is the result, in the words of an immortal ballad, of "doing what comes naturally."

So no good will come of trying to *acquire* a style, if one isn't practicing it already without effort; but, on the other hand, it is equally futile for anyone who aspires to creative achievement to isolate himself from the stream of consciousness of his time and shut himself up in a cell to contemplate his navel, or, even worse, to contemplate navels that long ago returned to dust. That may be the road to sainthood, but not to great artistry. Saints are notoriously deficient in physical offspring, dealing in matters of the spirit alone; the artist deals in spirit, but his job is to embody spirit in physical form. He must have animated progeny.

There are artists whose own spirits are stronger than the spirits of their time; if the time is great and they are in harmony with it, they will lead it and become a Giotto, a Michelangelo, a Shakespeare; if their time is meager and they are in advance of it,

### *static and dynamic concepts*

they will become a Cézanne or van Gogh, have obscure careers while they live, but lead their time into posterity. We needn't worry about *them*, in either category; they are like great forces of nature and will make their own destinies.

Most of us who try in our own way to do creative work aren't among these leaders. We aren't able to feed our young, like the pelican, on our own breasts. We need to renew our strength and refresh our spirit by constantly repeated contact with the greatest source of strength and vitality in the world — the great, all-enveloping spirit of the men and women who surround us. We need to share their interests, we need to be moved not by the passing waves of fashion that sweep over them, but by the deep, elemental surges of feeling that give direction to their works and lives. The artist must move his generation to some extent, at least if his work is really creative — but certainly he must also be moved *by* his generation. He must be a kind of aeolian harp on which the winds of his time make music — sometimes it is only a fragile music, but sometimes the winds and his sensitivity are both great enough to produce epic symphonies. Unless he exposes himself to the winds, the currents of his time, his case is hopeless.

Without any intention of consciously imitating their movement, the least we can do is to discover the ground swells that are lifting the human spirit today, revealing themselves in all the arts but most clearly in our buildings. This is not to acquire a "style," but to know it; knowing it, we may find that we are practicing it too, or that we have been moving toward it under our own inner compulsions. If we find it repugnant, that too will be worth knowing.

Not all the building of today is equally significant, of course, just as not all men are equally sensitive transmitters. What we seek is the building that is characteristic of our day and no other. And we are not interested in isolated examples — the building we seek must show a clearly defined trend, evident throughout our cultural unit which today is the whole civilized world. And they must not be monumental efforts only — a genuine style shapes the small as well as the great, the trivial as well as the sublime; it will manifest itself

## WALTER DORWIN TEAGUE

in little shapes as well as skyscrapers, and it will always reflect the habits, the moods, even the dress of the people for whom it is created.

Looking thus, we see certain unmistakable similarities appearing in all kinds of new building, in all parts of the world — from Stockholm to Rio de Janeiro, from Paris to San Francisco — and they are similarities that are easy to define.

First of all we see a great simplicity. The modern designer has no vocabulary of traditional detail whatever. He cannot elaborate his surfaces or his forms with familiar ornament, as even the greatest Greek builders could and did do. The modern designer deals only in elemental shapes, plain surfaces, pure line, textures, the quality of essential materials. He is a primitive on the threshold of a new epoch, with a minimum of heritage from the past. Perhaps in time his vocabulary will acquire what today seem superfluities; we do not know.

But that does not mean that the builder of today is poverty stricken. He has, first of all, a whole gamut of new materials and methods, capable of producing results that the designers of the past would not have conceived except in the realm of pure fantasy. He has, too, a long list of new functions to be performed, new needs to be served. And he has still the fundamental harmonics of all design; he can create rhythmic relationships between his masses, his areas, his lines, and his textures — those relationships that have always been the goal of great design but often in the past have been overlaid and blurred by unessential elaborations.

These basic characteristics of building are the same we see in modern painting, music, poetry, and the dance: a simplicity, a directness of statement that may seem stark to those accustomed to the more involved expressions of the past; continuous invention of unfamiliar forms; a readiness to experiment with new media; and an overriding concern with the purely aesthetic values to be realized in the relationships of essential elements.

These aesthetic values of relationships are ancient and unchanging, deriving from the nature of our sensory responses, our nervous

### *static and dynamic concepts*

system, and our thought processes. The elements with which they are worked out may be unfamiliar: they may be the forms of Picasso's painting, the masses of Le Corbusier's buildings, the verse structure of T. S. Eliot, the dissonances of Shostakovich, the dance movements of Agnes De Mille's ballets; and because the rhythms are so directly realized in all these art forms they may seem, to some, angular and harsh. It is true that they are never soft and gracile, but they have the dynamic vigor to which we today respond more enthusiastically than to any other stimulus.

This tendency toward dynamism arises in ourselves and our ways of life, of course — art being only an expression of our own predilections, as I have said from the start. We have changed our habits of dress, and on the slightest occasion we strip our bodies for action with a thoroughness that would have shocked our Victorian grandfathers and grandmothers beyond endurance; we value health and virility, and indulge a passion for athletics as the world has not done for many centuries; we have sloughed off a ponderous, involved system of formal etiquette, just as we have scraped off the excrescences from our buildings; we have acquired an immense breadth and sweep of physical movement, reducing the world to our own dooryard in terms of space and sight and sound; we have extended our vision into realms of the unseeable and acquired power literally to wreck the earth — or to transform it into a gracious dwelling place for all men.

We have accomplished this stupendous transition, quite understandably, in a period of great turmoil and much distress. This age is a threshold, and we stand either at the beginning of the end of the human race, or at its entrance into a new level of semihuman, semidivine competence. One thing we can be sure of: this is not a static period.

Perhaps, like Kant, I have started with the foundation of the universe and worked down to the particular thesis I want to prove at the moment. But having dealt with the background, I shall leave the foreground of my subject to you — I shall not attempt to tell how the spirit of the age should be translated into the printed page.



## WALTER DORWIN TEAGUE

I shall only say that to be vital in these times the physical format of a printed book cannot rely on static symmetry or mere excellent technique, or on the approved customs of the past. If it is to be an experience of value, it must first of all be simple; it must be functionally efficient; it must display an orderly but not conventional adjustment of relationships among its parts; it must have a verve to which our nerves and sympathetic muscles respond. It must, in short, be appropriate to the buildings of the future, not the past; it must have some reflection of the habits and manners of its readers; it must be a fitting vehicle for the contemporary verse and prose it so often carries. There are those who will not like it so well as the books of a more placid, more static, more conformist past; but there are many of the young in mind or body or both who will find that it belongs to *them*.

### *A Note on the Illustrations*

#### A-D

Here are buildings in California, as they were and as they have been modernized. You see a simplification, an insistence on major themes and on dominant masses — and this is because of the change which has happened to us. We have taken off the furbelows and the excrescences. We are getting down to the basic facts and the joy of life that should reside in all of us. A and B are the office of the American President Line. None of the details of the beams, and so forth, were structural; they didn't hold up anything except themselves. So when the front was reconstructed, it was possible to remove all that and make a simple plate-glass front which was in itself a billboard, its own advertisement.

#### E-J

Once we lived in houses built in the petticoat style and furnished in the same way. The furnishings of the living room in the 1890's (H) show evidence of an age of uncertainty, of unsurety, when people had to protest, when they had to assert their solvency and their social superiority, and when they did it with the help of the



### *static and dynamic concepts*

turning lathe and the carpenter, and did it as extravagantly as their imaginations could conceive. However, a man today, a solvent individual, building a home is very likely to build a house designed on a purely functional theory, with a form of symmetry which is not that of duplicating the right and the left but is the symmetry of true balance, of real relationship between the parts. And in furnishing our rooms of today we are apt to do something as simple and vigorous, and to my mind as beautiful, as the living quarters shown in E and G — careful arrangement of lovely objects with a definite relationship to each other. Even in our industrial interiors (F) we plan for that juxtaposition, that meeting of forms that seem to be alive, which characterizes so much of modern architectural design.

G is part of Le Corbusier's home, with one of his paintings in the background. It is a beautiful arrangement of areas, and the kind of thing that he carries over not only into his buildings, but into his paintings and other forms of design. I is a montage which he did for the Pavilion of the Modern Spirit at the Paris Exposition of 1937. If you look at the details, you find that he has exemplified the dominating tendencies of these times, and that throughout the whole thing runs that forceful, vital character which he puts into all his work.

Compare this exemplification of the spirit of the 1937 exposition with a detail of the Paris Exposition of 1890 shown in J. At the time of the earlier exposition Cézanne was at the height of his power, van Gogh had only four more months to live, and yet the architects in Paris were building these confections in baker's sugar. And they were considered gay!

### K-O

Here we have examples of the handling of space relationships on a page. We have a certain irreverence today which gives us added freedom for experimentation — if we did not have this irreverence, I do not think that anyone would have thought of uniting the prophet Elisha and Miss Josephine Baker on the same page (N),

## WALTER DORWIN TEAGUE

but this page is indicative of an attitude toward morals which is just as typical of our times as the petticoated females were of the Victorian age. It is also an interesting example in space arrangement and the use of essential elements. These pages use pure type and pure masses of type, extraordinary resources of photography, of design, of printing to produce the effect which has the dynamic impact to which we react.

### P-S

Architects today design not in detail but in masses (Q), not in unimportant factors but in the big, basic, all-important forms of their structures; and they try to create in those forms rhythmic relationships that are significant, but have aesthetic value regardless of what detail may be put on their surfaces. We have gone a step further than the isolated skyscraper, such as the old Waldorf Astoria (S) or the more modern Empire State Building (R); we are beginning to consider the relationship of buildings with each other. We are giving a tremendous amount of thought these days to city planning; instead of being satisfied with a single structure, we are beginning to think about how whole areas should be developed and integrated. The relationship of the buildings in Rockefeller Center (P) is not that planned on the classical basis of uniform right and left. There is a certain gesture in favor of conventional symmetry in the foreground, but it is quickly overshadowed — it no longer dominates, as it would have in the past.

All these examples show how we have changed our habits, in all things we do; we have changed our attitude toward life, our attitude toward ourselves. How can you help expressing yourself in your arts? How can you isolate your arts from the manners of your times, from your customs, from your tastes? You cannot keep your art musty and historical. We must realize that in these times the dynamic is the thing that thrills. Anyone today who tries to live in an ivory tower, in memories of the past, has shut the door of a tomorrow on himself.

## *the illustrator and the book*

### LYND WARD

ILLUSTRATION IS SOMETIMES DEFINED AS THE PICTURE THAT tells a story. Since with one jump this puts us right in the middle of an interminable argument about what is and what is not art, we will probably do well to record the truism that the art of illustration is a very old one, and was practiced on such diverse materials as the rock walls of tombs, the outer surfaces of pottery vessels, and wooden panels long before the specialized form we know as the book came into existence. And if we limit our concern to those pictures that have an existence directly related to the printed word, we will have a temporarily workable concept of something that, strictly speaking, is so much overlapped and overlapping that it defies attempts to isolate it scientifically.

The urge to make pictures that deal with the stories that other men invent and the myths that people live by is a very old one indeed. It is, in a sense, one of those universal magnets to which some individuals in the tribe will respond. Given a certain combination of interests and talents, it seems axiomatic that some members of the community will grow food and store it and others will make pictures about the activities of the growers of food and the world, both real and spiritual, in which they live. In primitive societies the man with the talent for pictorial representation and an interest in the ideology of his tribe will probably make altar images or totem poles. In twentieth-century America he is more likely to become a book illustrator.

It is another truism that the cultural pattern into which he happens to be born is the chief factor in determining what the individual does as a child and what kind of person he grows into as an adult. But ours is an era of great change, and our cultural pattern is a far from static one. Although his changing technology

## LYND WARD

is a little bit overshadowed by more spectacular developments in such things as jet propulsion, radar, and television, the book artist too lives in a changing world. That subtly woven fabric of ideas, motives, and technical considerations which governs the activities of the mature artist and guides the growth of the young one is a very different cloth from what it was a hundred years ago. Even those of us who can remember back thirty or forty years are conscious of how much the pattern has changed. As it has changed in the past so it is changing now, and in the future will undoubtedly exhibit characteristics that, if discernible at all today, are only hints of qualities to come.

This over-all pattern is a curious thing. In the larger sense it is the end result of the thoughts and actions of a great many individual book artists spread over quantities of space and running through quantities of time. It is something much larger than any one of us, and in a sense dominates us all. It is the existence of this pattern which determines the particular forms in which the young artists who are coming to maturity today will work.

It is a pattern that historians of the future will probably describe as having very definite characteristics. The different relations that an artist can have with the book have become somewhat formalized. We can list at least four general categories, and in each of these the artist functions on a different level of activity. The first of these might be called the Job of Decoration. In this the artist is very definitely the man who plays a soft obligato on muted strings while the author goes it full-voice solo alone. The relationship is reflected in the space division between words and pictorial matter in the book, as well as in the kind and placing of the pictorial units. Usually considerably less than 10 per cent of the total space is devoted to visual images, whereas in the second category, the Job of Illustration, the visual part of the book will carry up to 25 per cent of the page space. Our third listing could be called the Picture-Book Job, and here the relation between text and pictures in terms of space is about fifty-fifty. Our final heading would be something like the Artist's-Book Job, and this, as the words imply, is the kind



### *the illustrator and the book*

of book that is dominantly visual in its conception; the pictorial material carries the message and what words there are, are there only for utilitarian purposes — the cement that holds the bricks together.

These are, generally speaking, the several kinds of books we have, and the differences between them reflect the different relationships that can exist between the printed picture and the printed word. With these various possibilities in the back of his mind, the serious and sensitive artist will probably start his thinking about a projected book, after the proper period of immersion in the limpid pools of the author's words, by visualizing, somewhat vaguely at this point, a finished book consistent with the over-all quality of the text. Basically, of course, each manuscript will have logical requirements of its own that will put it more or less automatically into one of the several categories I have described. The logic of the text will also suggest the answers to such questions as "What impact is the book supposed to have on the reader?" "Should it be formal or informal?" "Should it be restrained, or warm and full of color?" The answers to these questions will have a great deal to say about the specific techniques to be used to reach the visualized goal. A modifying factor, it may be stated parenthetically, will probably enter at this point in the form of the ideas of the publisher, and whatever limitations of an economic nature he may feel impelled to suggest. From this point on it is simply a case of doing the work, of developing the over-all plan in which whatever pictorial material there is to be develops step by step into a book as a whole.

These forms are of course only the framework on which different artists will hang the differing paraphernalia of their own interests and experiences. It is the great good fortune of our age that the book has attracted to it as a medium of serious expression a great variety of individuals, the sum total of whose performance adds up to something pretty exciting and significant. Some are serious students of their art and highly conscious of its social and aesthetic implications; others move by instinct, and under the stimulus of a variety of motives.



## LYND WARD

In order to understand better what makes them tick, suppose we get a big net and try to capture a few specimens in their native habitat. Our first journey will be to one of those dark and bitterly gray side streets south of Washington Square. We'll turn in at a tiny opening between a delicatessen and a wholesale clothing house, push past cases of empty beer bottles, climb some rickety iron stairs to a door that opens from a murky courtyard into a gray room with one window and a skylight. Our quarry is seated at a drawing table in the midst of a vast conglomeration of paints, papers, sketches, books, canvases, and general disorder. If we are quick we can get the net over him and pin him to the specimen board where we can examine him at leisure. Our friend here is an American male, about forty years old, who came to New York from the Middle West two decades ago to be an artist. He has had several exhibitions of his paintings and has done considerable work in the print processes, particularly in lithography and more recently in multi-color woodcuts. Some months back, our artist became impatient with the hand-to-mouth existence through which he had survived during twenty years of odd jobs, summer teaching, and occasional sales of paintings and prints.

He decided to "go into books." He bethought himself of a friend from his own part of the country who, having a native talent for whimsy, had been very successful with a series of whimsical picture books for very young children. After a couple of hours of conversation with this person, our artist suddenly realized that all his life he had been fascinated by Indians. He recalled a boyhood spent near an Indian reservation, and he remembered many stories that he had heard from relatives whose memories stretched back to the days of covered wagons and scalplings. Innumerable trips to the museums of the city and long hours of conversation with the curators of their sections on Indian life, a long line of days at the library, and he was loaded with a bushel of factual material in which he felt sure he had the makings of a book similar in general form to many that he now noticed in the bookstore windows.

Painfully and slowly he wrote out about two thousand words of

### *the illustrator and the book*

text. This he discussed with an art critic friend of his, and thus came to realize that there was something more to writing than he had first anticipated. In desperation he called in the wife of another friend, an experienced professional writer, as collaborator. With a professional hand she started making order out of disorder, and by building fact and incident around the character of an Indian boy and his dog brought the breath of life into what had previously been an inert mass.

Having gotten his text, our artist next made a dummy of rough sketches built around the framework of the text, showed it to an editor, worked out the changes she suggested, received a contract for book publication, and did his finished drawings with separations in four colors — a process in which his skill and understanding gained from his previous graphic work stood him in good stead. When the book was published it proved to be a highly successful communication of a rich American experience. It brought a new understanding of Indian life to innumerable children all over the country. The man we have pinned down on our specimen board was hailed as the possessor of an unusual combination of talents, the newest luminary in the author-artist firmament.

In our search for Exhibit B we'll have to hurry uptown to the west seventies, where in a small apartment one flight up we can net ourselves a second book artist. This one is female, aged about thirty-five, who has lived in this country for about fifteen years, having been born in central Europe. Until a few years ago she earned a living working in an advertising agency, where she did paste-ups of type matter, booklet layouts, and some color work of a decorative nature for borders, title pages, and the like — a field in which her childhood contacts with the rich peasant art of central Europe gave her a special distinction. But her real interest lay in the field of books. Her ambition was to do serious interpretive drawings for great works of literature, and she spent long hours developing sample plates for such things as *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost*. When she took these to publishers who did occasional gift books she encountered a discouraging response. Her drawings

## LYND WARD

were always very beautiful in color, rich in decorative pattern, and full of fascinating detail; but her figures, no matter how hard she tried or how serious her intention, always turned out to be a little bit comic. When art editors would attempt to point this out to her she immediately went on the defensive, argued about the philosophy of book illustration, and left with her insides full of a burning rage.

Far from being convinced that there was any justice in this reaction to her drawings, she was sure she was right and that it was only a matter of time before the world would recognize the error of its overlooking her talent. This pattern might have gone on indefinitely had not an alert editor in a house specializing in packaging books for other publishers remarked the unusual quality in the decorative drawings on a small piece of advertising material that came his way. He tracked down the artist through the advertising agency, and the result of several conferences was that Exhibit B left her job with the agency and started work on what was to be the first of a series of books on different countries of the world. In form these books divided their space about equally between text and pictures, and the stories were written by different writers who were called in because of special knowledge of the countries involved. The first volume caused something of a sensation because of the unusual relation between text and pictures; and the bright color and wealth of detail of the drawings made them extremely popular with children. All the titles in the series have won a permanent place in schools and libraries, and working on a new book each year takes up all the time of the young lady we have just captured.

Our collection of book artists could of course be extended almost indefinitely. The pinning of these two to the specimen board serves only to point to our earlier truism that the artists who work on books do so in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. But regardless of these individual variations, our contemporary workers in the field have certain things in common. They all believe in the importance of the picture itself. The drawing must be a good drawing; it must have a character of its own, and be as interesting to

## *the illustrator and the book*

look at in its own right as any independent print or easel painting; it must have compounded in it those intangible elements we call aesthetic qualities, as well as those story-telling qualities prerequisite to its function as a book. There is a growing feeling that the caption as such is a superfluous redundancy, and dependence on it indicates an absence of integration between text and pictures. There is a growing awareness of the subtleties possible not only in the relation of picture to text, but in the relation of one sort of picture to another. The various types of pictorial statement possible in the categories of heading, half-page, full-page, spread, tail-piece, half title, section title, and marginal decorations are being studied with ever more concern for their psychological relation to the text they accompany. Better thinking in this department results in so planning and placing the pictures that the impact of the visual image hits the reader at the proper moment in the development of the book as a whole within his mind.

We are coming to realize that different types of books require different forms of picture-text relation as well as different kinds of drawings. These forms have almost as much to do with the total effect of the books as the character of the drawings themselves. A formal sequence of full page drawings on the right-hand side facing left-hand pages of text will give a totally different emotional reaction from the one resulting from a series of visual statements that start with minor incidents or details recorded in headings or marginal decorations and expand occasionally into full pages or spreads. This type of consideration is something that the book artist shares with no other worker in the plastic or graphic arts. The only comparable thinking to this is that done by the mural painter who must decide how to break up his theme to fit panels that already exist in different sizes and in different places in the room. It requires considerable sensitivity to the importance of different units of subject matter and a very real concern for the reaction of the spectator, or reader, to them in sequence. This comparison between the mural painter working on the walls of a room and the book artist pouring over his few square inches of white paper is not as



## LYND WARD

illogical as the disparity in sizes might suggest. It is possible to think of a book as a room or a contained space into which the reader goes, to be shut off from the noises and interruptions of the world's anarchic experiences. In this contained space he is subjected to a series of stimuli, partly words, partly pictures, all carefully controlled in sequence, content, and so far as possible, emotional impact. From this it follows that the artist is of necessity concerned with every physical aspect of the book. The sensations that the reader receives from jacket, binding, endpapers, title page, and typographic style are of great importance in determining the mood in which the reader reacts to all that lies within the inner room. Thus what he is getting is, I think, something new in graphic history — a book form that seeks to be not a decorative or decorated object per se, but an integrated conception and an integrated experience for the reader.

Obviously there is a great deal that goes on in the book world that is very far removed from this. But it is a tribute to the collective work of the many diverse individuals involved in the great tangle of threads that make up publishing that this concept is emerging. It is, I think, the result of infusion into the book form of many different experiences. Into it have come influences from England and the continent of Europe, as well as the special needs and ideology of our young and vigorous country which was only yesterday a frontier. Another influence is our developing technology — high-speed presses, color printing, and a variety of printing processes that make possible a far greater range of graphic effect than any previous generation has known. From this complex of new ideas and technical possibilities has come a freedom from the limitations that our predecessors knew and which all too often laid a deadening hand on the creative talent of those who worked under them. We would, of course, be less than wise not to recognize that our own technology promises limitations of its own. Our high-speed presses with their demanding appetites for large editions lay a heavy burden on those who plan. There is great pressure on them to think in terms of what is tried and true, is safe, and will,



### *the illustrator and the book*

so far as can be humanly anticipated, guarantee the popular reception that makes the accounting department happy. The weight of this influence cannot be underestimated. Artists feel particularly strongly about this, for if we are to grow we must experiment.

The traditional relation between artist and text embodied in the traditional illustrated book is not the one that has proved most stimulating to the artists of our day. In many ways the most imaginative and vigorous book work has been in the form we call the picture book. But the fact that by and large this form has been used for the very young has left the artist with the feeling that the ideological material he has had to work with has been less than fully satisfying. On the other hand, the more serious and worthwhile subject matter comes burdened with the weight of so many hundred thousand words that the adequate use of the picture-book form is generally out of the question. To resolve this difficulty many of our best artists have sought a middle ground in developing the picture-book form with material geared to the capacities of older children and young people.

But there are many things yet to be done, new wings to be tried, and I would like to hazard a guess that the years ahead will see an increasing use of the potentialities of this form in the field of serious books for adult readers.



# 3 STYLE

*individual expression*



## *the author and the printed book*

### DONALD KLOPFER

A MARRIAGE WHICH HAS LASTED FOUR HUNDRED AND seventy-five years should by now be considered fairly stable. Printers and publishers have been living together that long, through good times and bad, for better and for worse, through quarrels and repentances and strains and buffetings, through brief adulteries and long reconciliations. They should be accustomed to each other's ways; having made their bed together for almost five centuries, they should have learned to lie in it together without too much discomfort.

After 1476, when Caxton's Press was established in England, the relationship was for a time illicit, or at least on a common-law basis. In those early years it was on the whole a pleasant and profitable affair, as a monopoly with little or no opposition usually is. With the formation of the Stationers' Company, the couple was assured protection and security — for a time. Then came the devil into the Garden of Eden. The seducer who threatened the happiness of the honeymooners was the literary pirate.

To protect themselves against his designs, the family of printer and publisher, now augmented by the writer, fought for and achieved, in 1709, the first copyright law, known then as the Statute of Anne. Substantially the same as the copyright law of this day, it afforded protection for fourteen years, with a renewal period of equal time. Then, as now, it required registration and deposit. Actually the only modern improvements we have added are the doubling of the term and the printing of the copyright notice.

For two hundred and forty years the family history has undergone few startling changes. The pattern of the relationship between the practitioners of the graphic arts and the publishers is strikingly uniform. We stand firmly together against outside interference and



## DONALD KLOPPER

fly apart in family quarrels for as little or as much reason as can usually be found in dissension under one roof.

Let an attack be made on the freedom of the press, and there is a traditional rallying of the clan. If censorship is even suggested, differences are quickly forgotten in united action. Since long before John Milton's time, the advocates of suppression have realized that it is far more effective to strike at the source than it is to chasten an outspoken author. To burn books and destroy presses is to tear freedom out at its roots. At the first suggestion of such a threat, printers and publishers remember their family ties, bury all differences, and show what solidarity can do against a common enemy.

Let a printer, however, add an hour or two to his make-ready charges or pad his bills for author's alterations, and his brother-in-arms in the larger issues screams with rage. Let a publisher exercise his right to remove his plates from the vaults of one printer to another with a view of issuing subsequent editions or take advantage of a fractional differential in the cost of binding, and his villainy resounds through the trade. We seem to flourish on small quarrels. Yet when put to the real test on major issues, it becomes hearteningly clear that our interests are and must remain identical.

We act together in the socially and culturally essential function of disseminating ideas. We are dismembered and useless when we are divided and separated; we are a unit of indispensable worth to our society when we collaborate.

It is obvious that the graphic arts have grown into a many-armed industrial colossus, while publishing, especially in books, has remained a relatively small branch of the family. The prolific growth of advertising relegates books in the printer's scheme of things to a small corner of the household. Where books are printed and bound on a very large scale — as selections or dividends or premiums for the book clubs — the trade publisher finds himself almost in the position of a tolerated poor cousin.

Yet the role of the book publisher in relation to the graphic arts is fundamental and indispensable. It is the publisher, as the closest collaborator with the author, who helps create the first stimulus

## *the author and the printed book*

which gives life to the whole gigantic organism. He assists often enough in bringing the gleam that is first in the author's eye into a manuscript from which the book is made by the mechanical plant operating under the will and skills of the graphic artist. It is the publisher who is responsible for the distribution of the end product of a complex industry. It is the publisher who instigates, advertises, promotes, publicizes, and sells that product to the world. He invests his capital, his judgment, his reputation, and his experience in what is from beginning to end a coöperative venture.<sup>1</sup>

From the first step to the last there is an inseparable identification of purpose. Neither the graphic artist nor the publisher can operate in a void. The huge contributions of the former — in design, in production, in speed, in efficiency, in all the complicated techniques of his craft — have made possible mass dissemination of ideas in a free society. The publisher needs every facility of the large industrial plants. He cannot hide in a monastery, summon his scribes and copyists, prepare quills and parchment, and expect to find readers beyond the limits of his cloister. Whether he likes it or not, the publisher belongs to the industrial age. The graphic artist has long since made a conspicuous place for himself in it. Together, their contribution to our culture grows in substance and in spirit.

The demands of that culture are more and more enlightenment, instruction, entertainment, stimulation, criticism, beauty, utility, and general accessibility to all knowledge in a free world. Books remain the chief means of supplying that endless need. Closer and

<sup>1</sup> Because of the great public concern about the increased cost of books, I should like to cite my own experience with the Modern Library series as an example of what publishers are doing, and why. This series is uniform in format, and the specifications are just about the same now as they were in 1941. Today the publisher's costs for these books is 100 per cent more than it was in 1941, but the price has only been increased 30 per cent. Richard Fuller, of the Old Corner Bookstore in Boston, did a little research into the increase in the price of books. He took the first 126 non-fiction titles from both his 1926 and 1949 catalogues and averaged their retail prices. The increase was exactly 7 per cent. How many products are there that have done as well? Publishers are making every effort to keep the retail price of books down; we don't want to price ourselves out of the market — but we have to keep somewhere close to the black side of the ledger or we would go out of business.

## DONALD KLOPPER

closer collaboration between the publisher and the graphic artist will extend, through books, our usefulness and our influence in our own time.

That collaboration should be taken for granted. In the day-to-day functioning of publisher and printer it asserts itself in manifold ways. But what is forgotten or overlooked in the immensity of the plant of the graphic artist and in the growing vertical operations of the publisher is the actual source of some of their wealth and a little of their woe.

Certainly the first impetus of the mass-production operation in the making of books cannot be found among the intricate machines of the huge printing and binding establishments. It is only seldom discovered in the elaborate suites of offices maintained by the publisher. You will look in vain for it at the literary cocktail party or the conventions of booksellers or the trade gatherings of the printing and binding executives.

The first impetus can only be traced to a man who, all alone, is groping to give form to his ideas in a manuscript. It is the writer upon whom the whole inverted pyramid rests. It is on him that publishers depend. On him the presses wait.

Technological advances in our own time have been phenomenal. Distribution has improved so miraculously that we have almost convinced ourselves that the communication of ideas can be changed into a mass industry, organized into cartels and expanded infinitely. Under the influence of such grandiose delusions, we are suddenly brought to a halt with the realization that ideas and their first embodiment in a manuscript must forever remain an individual creative act. The author, first of all, must write his books. He must think them out in the privacy of his own imagination. He must have time to let his thoughts germinate and find their final expression. To achieve all this he must be given the stimulus, the encouragement, the backing, and a share of the rewards.

Frequently the writer feels he is getting none of these. He may well look upon the paper manufacturer, whose product in his field is worthless without his words upon it, with envy. The profits in

## *the author and the printed book*

the paper industry are spread on the financial pages for him to read with awe. He sees the printing company pay higher and higher labor costs and always reap a proportionate return. The binder is sure of his money. The cloth manufacturer, the dye maker, and the distributor are reasonably certain of their percentage of profit, collectible on delivery. Only the author and the publisher are forced to gamble.

Even if the author receives what is generally considered a substantial advance for a book, it is hardly enough to sustain him during the long period of writing. If his book fails to capture the public fancy, that is virtually the end of his earnings. Everyone else concerned has been paid off. The author, in all fairness, simply cannot be expected to wait for a far-off day when he might hit the jackpot with a best-seller. The odds are too astronomically against such a miracle.

And what of the unpublished writer? Scattered throughout the United States there are hundreds of thousands of these aspirants doomed to frustration and disappointment. To the twenty leading publishing houses in America there come annually an average of two thousand unsolicited manuscripts. Hopefully they are submitted. In almost every instance they go back with a courteous but final rejection. In a survey made over a period of eight years in one house, the statistics on unsolicited manuscripts were nothing short of tragic. Of approximately sixteen thousand unsolicited manuscripts submitted, but three were accepted. Of these, one showed a slight financial profit, one broke even, and the third entailed a loss.

These figures certainly indicate that the maintenance of a branch of the editorial department devoted to unsolicited manuscripts is economically indefensible. Yet in the interest of good will and the moral necessity of encouraging every kind of writing, the publisher cannot and should not ignore the unpublishable writer.

In the year of 1947 there were 9,182 titles published in the United States. By far the highest number of titles in the twenty-three categories classified by *Publisher's Weekly* came under the designation of fiction. There were 1,966 novels as against 933 of the next nearest



## DONALD KLOPPER

competitor, juveniles. Lowest in the scale came books on music, with 94. Religion was high on the list, as were biography, poetry, philosophy, and books on technical, medical, historical, sociological, and scientific subjects.

The question of what becomes of all these new books is almost rhetorical. Everyone knows that their mortality rate is appalling. Not more than one-fifth of them can be reviewed or even noticed at all in our journals and newspapers, simply because the columns devoted to criticism cannot possibly afford the space. If  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1 per cent achieves the best-seller lists, that is an overgenerous guess. The jackpot probabilities are far smaller. Of those books which have the good fortune to be reviewed favorably, only two or three, at best, survive beyond a season.

The author, it goes without saying, can read. He scans these frightening figures and asks himself where he belongs in this dismal picture. For centuries he has plied his craft in the loneliness of his garret and has accepted the condition of poverty as the natural role of the scribe. Now, however, taking his cue from other economically unfavored groups, he is beginning to ponder the virtues of organization almost along union lines. The mystery writers, whose slogan is "murder does not pay — enough," have already marshaled their forces and are making the customary demands for more money, better working conditions, and even the right to vacations with pay from their gruesome trade.

Other writers, through their national organization, the Author's League of America, have taken the first step toward righting some ancient wrongs. One of their initial achievements has been the formulation of a model contract, already signed and in force with at least one publisher. This contract, in general, departs from the traditional agreements, in favor of the author, in three fundamental concepts. First of all, the legal title for the book remains for the life of the copyright with the author. This establishes his property rights as they had never been established before. The publisher is merely licensed by the author to print and distribute his work. Second, the author is the final arbiter in the matter of arranging for



## *the author and the printed book*

reprints of his writings. And, third, on the delicate problem of selling motion picture, television, and other such rights, the publisher, acting as agent, is entitled to 10 per cent of the proceeds. Whether he acts as agent or not he is entitled to one half of the amount he has spent on advertising the book, but in no case can he get more than 10 per cent of the author's take. The equity of such an arrangement is based on the fact that a book generously advertised commands greater public acceptance and hence has increased value as a motion picture or television venture.

For the rest, this new, model contract guarantees more generous terms to the writer on such items as advances, author's alterations, free copies, prompter payment of royalties, and so forth. In spirit, as well as in letter, this agreement marks a substantial advance in the relationship between publisher and author.

That relationship, as a simple matter of common interest and purpose, goes beyond the mere stipulations of a contract. It is by its very nature a mutual enterprise in the complex structure of the creation and dissemination of ideas.

The publisher and the author are inseparable; if they were to become divided, both would find themselves working and living in a void, and inevitably would destroy each other. The graphic artist depends, as well, on both to feed the insatiable machines at his command. Thus the whole organism — writer, publisher, and graphic artist functioning in unity — can thrive only if the interplay among its components can be kept in balance. Each unit is and must remain responsible to the other and to the free world of ideas in which it came into existence and in which it has its reason for being.

I have spoken of many things technical and mechanical in the author-publisher-graphic artist relationship, and I want to talk of only one more thing — taste and standards. At a Printing for Commerce show sponsored by the AIGA in New York, thousands of examples of commercial printing were submitted to an impartial jury. The number of pieces qualified for final showing was dismally small. What does this mean? It means that there is insufficient education in the high standards necessary for fine printing. With all of our

## DONALD KLOPFER

technological improvements, standards have not improved. There is an enormous educational job to be done. The United States, which produces more printed matter than any other country in the world, has no education at the college or graduate level for the graphic artist. The designer is truly a self-made, self-educated man in this great country. Thanks to the example of Alfred A. Knopf in the twenties, publishers in the book field have given increasing thought to the improvement of their product. Textbooks today, juveniles and regular trade books are coming along but have a long way to go. We are hampered by the lowering of standards during the war, and it is only by ceaseless hammering at the technicians that we can improve. And we sorely need education in our industry! <sup>2</sup>

The real contact between the author and the graphic artist is almost always through the publisher. Authors are normally vain. They want their books to be good looking. Seldom do they know anything about type faces, cloth, board, design, or any of the many things that make a book. But some of them have taste and some of them react to high standards of craftsmanship. The publisher must help both the author and the manufacturer to realize these ideals.

<sup>2</sup> Books, I'm sorry to say, are unimportant, or comparatively unimportant, in their influence on the graphic arts today. Look at the newspapers, the magazines, the advertising material — those are the pieces of printing, the products of the graphic arts with which the American public is really familiar. It is in those fields that we must try really to raise our standards and improve our taste.

## *the avant-garde*

### HERSCHEL LEVIT

THE CREATIVE ARTIST HAS ALWAYS HAD THE SPECIAL QUALITIES which enable him to produce a form characteristic of his time and place. Fortunately for the progress of art, the imagination and ingenuity of the artist has shown in every period the remarkable correctness of this form.

Aside from the purely intuitive path of the artist, there has existed a rich relationship between the sciences and art. Although this liaison has rarely been conscious, it nonetheless has existed as a strong interactive force.

Recalling the introduction of the use of perspective and of anatomical research during the early days of the Renaissance, we become aware of the correctness of the forms in the art works of the period. These forms were the exact medium through which individual artists expressed the search for greater human experience.

Without the experimentation of Masaccio, the Florentine artist of the early fifteenth century, it would be difficult to visualize the ensuing developments that greatly extended Masaccio's discoveries; namely, the use of "correct" perspective, chiaroscuro effects, atmospheric depth, and the general feeling of reality. For its time, it must have been a breath-taking experience for the observer. Shaking from his brush, as it were, the last vestiges of medieval thought, Masaccio was able to realize, in terms of his art, the essential form of his day; the new era of earthly realities.

Similarly, in our own time, we have experienced many new forms. It wouldn't be too preposterous to assume that the great number of innovations and experiments conducted in the past fifty years are geared to the tempo of this century, literally and figuratively. In fact, the particular and specific twentieth-century forms in America,

## HERSCHEL LEVIT

such as Jazz, the electronic microscope, Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, Dos Passos' *U. S. A.*, to mention a few, have contained within them precisely and accurately those qualities which we call twentieth century. To imagine these creations in any other era would be an impossibility. Their timeliness for now, we accept profoundly. By "we" I refer to those who have given time and energy to participation in the events of our day. There exist, needless to say, forces which resist change. Change implies giving up well-worn habits. Comfortable though they may be, habits can be rut forming; the deeper the rut, the greater the resistance.

Despite "Societies for Sanity in Art," National Academies, and other museum relics of nineteenth-century thought, the forms of art cannot be legislated. There never has existed an "official" art that didn't, sooner or later, give up its outmoded life, or eventually be revitalized by nourishing itself on the specific forms it previously denounced as revolutionary.

Many of our staunchest advocates of "sane" art today employ as their "official" form techniques which are considerably watered-down versions of French impressionism. In the 1870's and 1880's, the great French masters, such as Cézanne and Renoir, were embarking on uncharted courses, while almost everyone else was comfortably illustrating antique history, or painting sentimental bucolic scenes, all done in a vapid mixture of brown soup and varnish.

The "sane" artists always strive to maintain the *status quo*, choosing to ignore those elements of their time that have inspired and given impetus to genuine artists for further exploration and experimentation.

The true artist is the grindstone of the senses; he sharpens eyes, mind, and feeling; he interprets ideas and concepts through his own media. In the midst of vast social controversies, he cannot escape that task. He has to take sides and proclaim his stand; indeed the artist has a formative ideological function, otherwise his work would be only an exercise of skill in composition. Hitler was aware of this. He propagandized trash, he tried to destroy modern art, science, and philosophy as the greatest sources of opposition to his vicious system of oppression. He banned the contemporary, the "degenerate" art, as he called it, from galleries

and museums, burned books, and forbade the teaching of Einstein's theories.<sup>1</sup>

We have come to appreciate more and more the importance and real value of such modern artists as Mondrian, Picasso, Arp, and Calder for their immeasurable influences on architecture, industrial design, advertising art, and typographical design.

The younger generation of artists in America today continue to experiment boldly. There have been an increasing number of architects who happily show a desire to incorporate in their plans, as an integral part, the work of these artists. Similarly, publishers of books, not necessarily on art and related themes, have employed modern methods of format and typography.

In the field of advertising, many clients have shown a preference for the work of our most inventive designers. Record album covers, book jackets, direct-mail brochures, and so on, have shown the results of the assimilation of the forms of modern painters.

As a result of the fresh impact these new forms had on the public at large, many publications of a more conservative nature have been carried into the stream in order to maintain their well-established position in the business world. In a few cases dire necessity has caused the changes to a more contemporary format.

It must be admitted, however, that many evidences of superficiality do exist. Chrome and glass, applied with a lavish hand, do not necessarily constitute the true modern spirit. Rather, it is a cheap imitation; a sterile façade that has, unfortunately, caused the layman to assume that all so called "modern" art is hard, brash, cold.

When, however, the modern artist resolves his forms in a truly functional manner, his purpose becomes clear, concise, and exciting.

In advertising art, techniques of the modern painters, such as collage, new concepts of color and form, stimulating textual devices, give fresh visual effects to their work. The advances made by these artists in their various fields of activity have, in fact, placed the old methods on the defensive.

In the recent exhibition of advertising art held at the Museum of

<sup>1</sup> L. Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago, 1947).



## HERSCHEL LEVIT

Modern Art, it was clearly demonstrated to what extent the new movement in art had permeated and influenced the thinking on the part of illustrators, book designers, and directors of advertising for newspapers and periodicals. The purpose of this exhibition was to review the *avant-garde* in the commercial art world of 1948. That it was not a cross-section of advertising art was made evident by the hue and cry of those who were not represented in the exhibit. It was a kind of Armory Show for the commercial art world. For a brief moment the atmosphere, as it were, was cleared.

If not for the apparent excesses that have characterized the forms of such artists as Picasso, Gertrude Stein, and Arnold Schönberg, it would be hard to imagine the twentieth century without their vast influences on generations of younger artists. What appears to the uninitiated as farfetched extremes, practiced by the *avant-garde* of the younger group, is in reality the same spirit of invention that has identified our time.

That everything is in a state of flux on every level of human experience is manifested by a veritable tug-of-war on all levels — social, political, economic, and scientific, as well as artistic.

That it will take a long time to resolve these differences is also very clear. We have been made aware by many prominent writers of the great disparity that exists between our technological advances and the degree of man's understanding of his contemporary world.

Through ignorance and superstition, man is still capable of committing atrocious acts against his fellow man. In this respect it appears to be difficult to mark any change from the mentality of the prehistoric man so recently erected from the quadruped. In spite of this, the lags between art and science and man continue to lessen; the gaps close steadily. From this realization we can assume a more optimistic attitude.

Today the modern forms have reached the average homemaker. In most of the popular magazines, editorials on interior design and architectural plans for the modest builder clearly indicate the new trends. Advertisements use modern techniques in photography and layout to merchandise products, illustrations for stories have fresh-

### *the avant-garde*

ness of color and boldness of design that would have been considered as preposterous not many years ago.

Thus we can trace from the startling innovations by our greatest artists, scientists, writers, and musicians at the beginning of the century the evolution of our participation in these discoveries to the present day.

The freedom to express oneself through experimentation is the rightful heritage of our artists, for without experimentation there can be no art; there can be no future.

# *experimentation and the individual— a psychological approach*

## EDNA BEILENSON

I SUPPOSE IT MIGHT BE CONSIDERED CUSTOMARY TO APPROACH the subject of experimentation from the point of view of the different schools of design, and perhaps to elaborate on their influence on the field of printing. But in mulling the subject over in my mind, my thoughts kept reverting to the role of the individual — his characteristics, his personality, and the hidden springs in him that make him work in the manner that he does. What makes one designer a traditionalist and another an experimentalist; what makes one man spend his lifetime looking backward, and another man spend his life looking forward? Pretty soon I found myself humming an old Gilbert and Sullivan favorite:

I often think it's comical — Fal, la!, la!  
How Nature always does contrive — Fal, la!, la!  
That every boy and every gal  
That's born into the world alive  
Is either a little Liberal  
Or else a little Conservative! Fal, la!, la!

I am not willing to believe that Mr. Gilbert has told the whole story. The individual is a combination of what he was at birth plus the environment in which he lives.

There are many examples of designers changing their style, and sometimes it is only the passing of time and consequent maturity which effects this change. In the field of painting, Picasso and Dali and many of our other important modern painters started their careers by working in the traditional manner. And sometimes the converse is true: the designer goes through a series of wild experiments and finally settles down to a style that is essentially traditional. Psychologically, this latter is more sound. In his salad days, a young

## *experimentation and the individual*

man storms about trying to tear down all his surrounding traditions — traditions which it has taken careful generations to build up; but before he has traveled very far along the road of life he begins to think that the old boys were not so corny after all. And then one day he looks in the mirror and he realizes that he's getting to be one of the "old boys" himself. He finds that his work has long ago ceased to be daring or new, and that the younger men in his profession have begun to describe him as traditional! Has he changed, or have the times changed? Probably both!

In discussing the fact that a designer may change his point of view, hence his style, in a lifetime, we have skirted our subject but we have not really attacked it. We are searching to explain why some designers tend toward the traditional and others toward the experimental. Let us take a look at the kind of people who are generally creative.

By and large, the people who accept life as it is are not the creators. It is those who struggle with life in one way or another and who have to strive for internal equanimity in whose ranks most of our designers are found. Psychologists list three groups into which these creative people fall. Our world of printing is indebted to all three groups; and we would be poorer without any one of them. No group is better than the other; each group is different from the others. Most of the people I mention I know well and love dearly, so if I seem to deal coldly with them for purposes of critical analysis, I hope they will forgive me. It is the penalty of their accomplishment!

Briefly, these are our human categories: group one, consisting of those who move compulsively *toward* people and who depend for their security upon the approval of others; group two, consisting of those who move compulsively *against* people in the sense that they enjoy struggle and competition and build their security on their own internal strength; and group three, consisting of those who move *away* from people to find their peace and security far from the madding crowd.

We are faced with an interesting question. To what degree does the designer's fundamental struggle with life affect his work, and

## EDNA BEILENSON

more specifically, what kind of design in printing is likely to evolve from the groups we have specified above?

I think that in the first category, among those who move *toward* people, we find our traditionalists. Such people are apt to be dependent — dependent upon their fellows for approval, and dependent on the masters of the past as well. Doing things the way their grandfathers did them gives them comfort and protection. Designs that were well received a hundred years ago are tried and true; and in creating along traditional lines these people are well bolstered not only by the approbation of the present, but also the approbation of the past.

In this first category I place Frederic W. Goudy of The Village Press, whose extraordinary record in the creation of new type designs you all know. Mr. Goudy was a passionate believer in tradition, and was most confused and unhappy upon the introduction of radically new styles in the 1920's. The work of D. B. Updike of the Merry-mount Press belongs in this group too, although Mr. Updike's personality has been described to me as quite reserved. Unfortunately, I never knew Mr. Updike.

In the second category we find the man who is willing to take up the struggle alone against civilization. Here we have the rugged individualist who defies tradition with his last gasp, and who has the temerity to bring forth aggressively new designs and march boldly toward the formation of new trends. I always like to think of Merle Armitage in the front row of this parade, holding a flying banner in one hand and a trumpet in the other. It is more invigorating to watch this parade than any other in the world: it's new, it's fresh; it's apt to be startling! May we have more Merle Armitages to march in it!

At this point I am reminded of another, younger, rugged individualist named Jack who confronted his mother one day with: "Mother, do you remember the jug you told me had been handed down from generation to generation?" Mother said she had. "Well," said Jack, "this generation dropped it!" Jack belonged to category two.

In category three we find the designers with the highly developed



## *experimentation and the individual*

imaginations. These men are both traditional and experimental, depending upon the past for some of their inspiration yet adding to it a quality of whimsy and fantasy that seems native only to those spirits which are happier when withdrawn from the strain and excitement of competition. Here we find a wealth of sly humor as well as a wealth of loveliness, and here we find such great names as Cleland and Dwiggins and Bruce Rogers.

As we discussed the three groups of designers—roughly, the traditionalists, the experimentalists, and the combined traditionalists and experimentalists—obviously you must be thinking: In which category do I belong? In which category does my friend Mr. Blank belong? What about Mr. Smug, who doesn't fall into any category at all, or even worse, how do you explain Mr. Milquetoast, whose work is just as bold as poor little Mr. Milquetoast is mild?

Let us dispose of Mr. Smug first. He does not seem to fall into any group, or rather, he seems to fall into every group. You must remember that the characteristics cited in each group apply to the pure or extreme type. Most of us are combinations of two or three types; even when we are basically one group, we learn to apply and combine characteristics of another group. Let us say that Mr. Smug started out in life by being the dependent sort: type one. He did not have to live very long before he discovered that his dependency had to be tempered with a little aggressiveness if he wanted to get by in this world of keen competition. So Mr. Smug learned aggression little by little, and grafted it onto his fundamentally dependent personality. If we translate Mr. Smug's story into the world of printing we have the case history of the designer who starts out by being completely traditional in his approach. He is entirely satisfied with the work he produces and he would be content to go on producing the same kind of work forever. But one day he meets up with a snag. A customer turns him down because his work is too old-fashioned. Mr. Smug, having a wife who wants a fur coat, and three children (little beasts!) who still drink milk in spite of the high cost of living, gets busy and sparkles up his work with something new. Mr. Smug has branched out into group two!

## EDNA BEILENSON

Now let us turn to your friend, Mr. Milquetoast. Mr. Milquetoast has all the outward appearances of a reticent little man. He is the kind who boards a train last, never raises his voice above a whisper, and is thoroughly henpecked by his wife. Yet little Mr. Milquetoast turns out big, bold, vigorous designs. His work is as aggressive as he seems to be retiring. How do we explain little Mr. Milquetoast?

A number of years ago Sigmund Freud was impressed by the fact that a person under induced unconsciousness, that is, when put to sleep by hypnosis, can be instructed to carry out certain acts when he wakes up — and when he wakes up he performs these same acts. He has no recollection of the instructions given him under hypnosis, and has no idea why he performs the acts. This, Freud reasoned, meant only one thing, namely, that mental activity extends beyond the limits of consciousness and that the individual remembers unconsciously. Then Freud carried the application one step further. In the case of a person exhibiting incomprehensible behavior could the clue be found in his unconscious? After a great deal of work with experimentation in free association Freud arrived at an affirmative conclusion. (Free association, as you know, is the name of the method commonly used by most psychiatrists in analysis where the patient says anything that comes to mind and one idea leads to another until the source of trouble is finally uncovered.)

Little Mr. Milquetoast is a case in point. He has found it advantageous in life to assume a false cloak of modesty and docility, but his unconscious mind forces him to compensate for the betrayal of his true character by demanding that he express his true self in his work.

When the quality of a designer's work is discussed it is often characterized as "masculine" or "feminine," and these are characteristics that I should like to take a moment to explore. In this discussion I should like to ignore any of our earlier groupings because whereas I could arbitrarily apply either one or both of the adjectives to the three groups, individual designers within the group vary so markedly that such an arbitrary application could only cause confusion.

Now what exactly do the words "masculine" and "feminine," as

## *experimentation and the individual*

we use them in design, mean? In general, when we talk of qualities as being womanly or female we think of the softer and more gracious things in life. Mother is our earliest and pleasantest recollection. She loves and cuddles us; she feeds us; she allays our pain. On the other hand, we tend to dispose of Father summarily. Father is busy making money. Even the nursery rhymes aid and abet these concepts. It is unfair, but I shall have to quote:

What are little girls made of?  
Sugar and spice  
And all things nice;  
That's what little girls are made of.

What are little boys made of?  
Snips and snails  
And puppy-dog tails;  
That's what little boys are made of!

I must pause here to say that I have never heard anybody, not even the littlest, recite that nasty little rhyme without a nasty little smirk at the end of it!

And thus our culture educates us to believe that all the good and gentle qualities are feminine, and all the cold and ruthless qualities are masculine. Now if we carry this analogy into our own field, it would seem to follow that the cold part of style or design, the part that deals with structure or composition, could be termed masculine; and the warmer part, the part that deals with color and embellishment, could be termed feminine.

Without considering the subject in all its ramifications, I should like to place a safe bet that most women dream of being "womanly" and most men dream of being "manly." But can you honestly think of anyone who is entirely female or male? A thoroughly female person, according to our rough specifications, would be mush; a thoroughly male person, stone. Fortunately, nature endows us with a generous supply of both kinds of genes, the feminine prevailing in the female, and the masculine in the male.

In applying these conclusions to our own field, I find that it is true that women tend to experiment with color and applied decora-

## EDNA BEILSON

tion, and that men tend to experiment with basic form and structure. But since we have discovered that there are no purely female or male personalities, and since we know design to be a reflection of personality, it is not surprising that many of our women designers experiment with form as well as embellishment, and many of our men designers experiment with embellishment as well as form.

Now what prompts a man to become a designer in the first place? All of us have a strong creative force, and this creative force is the most constructive element in our make-up. Any destructive forces that we may acquire, and which result from life experiences, interfere with our basic drive which, when it is healthy, is constructive. The drive to create takes on many forms. It encourages some of us to raise large families, it encourages others to build big businesses, it drives still others to exploration and discovery of new territories; and in some of us it stimulates the desire to create books. Making books is not as purely a creative art as painting or writing or composing music, but it can be just as satisfactory. It becomes most satisfactory when an element of newness is discernible in the finished product.

No book which is a rubber stamp of the generations of books that have gone before can be important; and whereas the traditional designers, whom we have designated as group one, lean heavily upon the past, the great designers in that group have contributed qualities of their own as well. Village Press books bear the imprint of Goudy's personality, and Merrymount Press books the imprint of Mr. Uppdike's.

Group two designers are least inhibited and have the most fun. To them nothing is outrageous or impossible. A book need not have four corners; it can be oval or round. Indeed, it can take on the shape of a shoe, and did in the case of the Mother Goose book of a few seasons back. There is nothing holy about conventional margins. Type can bleed or it can sit in odd places on the page. Top margins can be wide and bottom margins narrow; side margins can take on any measurement at all. Our type two designer can use slick paper whose gloss knocks your eye out; or he can use primitive sheets that



## *experimentation and the individual*

seem to have chicken feed and whole-wheat cereals chopped up in them. Or he can make his own paper in his bathtub at home, preferably out of his family's best sheets and pillowcases. He can use satin or brocade for his bindings, he can use cellophane or isinglass or fur. Dard Hunter tells the story of a lady who bound a testimonial volume in her deceased husband's skin! Mr. Hunter said he heard a while later that the lady had married again, and he often wondered whether the second husband ever visualized a volume two! The books that issue from group two designers are often strange, and not always entirely successful; they are always interesting.

Since I have mentioned Mr. Armitage's name earlier as being typical of group two, I must interpolate here that none of his books, in my recollection, have depended upon odd materials, but have derived their forward effect from basic construction or format.

Our group three designers work with conservative materials, and rely upon color and embellishment for their effect. Their embellishment often takes the form of printer's flowers or type ornaments, and Bruce Rogers, especially, is justly famous for the masterly use of type ornament — which he so often used to perfection in his earlier work. Mr. Dwiggins, on the other hand, is famous for his calligraphic touches and his subtle and unerring use of color. As I have said before, this group combines the best of the past with the best of the present.

And that reminds me of the little stenographer who meets her friend on the street and says, "How I wish I could find a man that combines the best qualities of Georgie and Johnny! Georgie is tall, dark, handsome, and rich. And Johnny? Why, Johnny wants to marry me!"

Our three groups of men would have worked differently no matter what era they had lived in. But until the 1890's there was no such thing as the professional designer in printing, and so until the 1890's personal differences were much less apparent. But at that time differences emerged. We picture William Ernest Henley as a reversionist, who allied himself with tradition and became a practical commercial printer. We see William Morris, the rebel, in revolt against the drab-



## EDNA BEILENSON

ness of the Victorian age. And we see the aesthetic group, typified by Aubrey Beardsley, Charles Ricketts, and Laurence Housman, who were perhaps too precious and too pretty, but who were nonetheless an important link between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

The twentieth century is half over (perish the thought!), and although we are too close to offer an objective viewpoint it would seem to be shaping up as a century of enormous vitality with a plenitude of new materials, new forms, and new concepts. And yet it has given birth to men who are sturdy pillars of tradition, as well as those who are disciples of experimentation. And in the midst of all its noise and commotion it has also given us kindly and gentle souls, who remind us that there is not only the reality of daily life but also the pleasant and rewarding world of dreams.

In closing, I want to tell you the story of a little old Frenchman who was asked to look back upon his long and full life, and say truly whether in his experience he found that there was much difference between men and women. "*Ze différence*," he answered, "eet is not much. But *Vive la différence*!"

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how *I* feel about the different types of designers: *Vive la différence*!

## *the amateur printer: his pleasures and his duties*

### PETER BEILENSON

ALTHOUGH THE TITLE OF THIS PIECE IS SUFFICIENTLY LONG TO be impressive and important-sounding, all I really want to write about is printing as fun. I am going to write about the amateur printer, and the amateur is the fellow who has fun.

I do not wish to belittle the affection a professional printer may have for his work. He should love his work. But he can love it only in a different way: for after all he is essentially a businessmen about it. His work, like that of any other businessman, is something he has to sit down to by nine in the morning, and something he can't leave until five at night. It is something that involves landlords and labor unions, payrolls and tax inspectors, truckmen, office-boys, salesmen, compositors, pressmen, bindery workers — and customers. He has to worry about payments, and depreciation, and publicity, and time sheets.

The professional has to concern himself with all these things which are not printing at all, because he is in business and has to make money. His primary yardstick of success as a professional is: *How much money did we make last year?* Of course he has other minor yardsticks of success too: he may be successful because his presses turn out useful things like timetables, or gratifying things like corporation reports for the year 1948, or beautiful things like four-color reproductions of Varga girls. To make these things well is a kind of fun; and insofar as the fun comes from the satisfaction in the thing itself rather than in the profit that derives from it, I'd like to call it amateur satisfaction.

But essentially our professional printer — and permit me to limit myself to the professional book printer — is supposed to make money, not to have fun. And he makes money best, nowadays, if his

## PETER BEILENSON

plant is equipped with the efficient modern machinery which is designed for maximum production. Such machinery is a wonderful creation of man; it is thrilling to watch in action; and it gets results. But it has its disadvantages. Now that mechanization is becoming more and more complete in more and more places, we can begin to see clearly the greatest disadvantage of all: under such mechanization individual workers have lost pride and satisfaction in their work, because they have become mere replaceable units of less and less importance; whereas the machines they operate are more and more important, and have become the essential units.

A generation ago the professional printer might have boasted of his skilled compositors, who could set type more expertly, or his skilled pressmen, who could make more careful overlays or match ink better than someone else's craftsmen. Today he boasts of his remote-control composing machines, his presses which come close to eliminating make-ready altogether, and his ink supplier's new gadget which matches colors scientifically. Today the most successful printer is the one who with the least possible dependence on man power can keep the most presses running fastest for the greatest number of hours per day and days per year. He is not the one with the most-skilled craftsmen.

In such a world, where the executive's function is to feed the machine and the workman's is to tend it, the human spirit begins to cry out for the fun in work which I have called the amateur satisfaction. It is true that today's shorter working hours — which the machine makes possible — permit people to have more outside fun; permit the manager to play more golf, and the workman to play more softball (or more pinball) in the late afternoons; it is true that more people now see more beer advertised on more television programs, and may even drink more of it, in the evenings. But managers and workmen alike turn so avidly to such kinds of fun because they no longer get fun out of their daily work. It is becoming harder and harder for people to equate work and happiness.

Now I do not set myself up as a social reformer dedicated to the dream that all people should be happy in their work. Nor do I pro-

## *the amateur printer*

pose as a step to this end that we revert, smash the wonderful machines, and go back to the good old days when everyone really *did* work with his hands — usually from dawn to dark, six days a week. There was no pinball or television then, but *still* I do not wish to go back! Nor do I suggest that the solution is the promised thirty-hour week, with all the workmen driving their own Buicks home at two each afternoon, and taking out the wife and kiddies to Braves Field or the Gardner Museum.

But I do suggest that some of you people who really love printing, but are too involved with the nine to five daily business of it to enjoy it much, should enrich your lives by becoming amateur printers in your spare time. You will have fun.

I yield to no man in my boredom with vegetables and salads. I see green at every meal save breakfast. I have eaten enough string beans to stretch — if they were straightened out and laid end to end — from the Fordhook Nurseries in Delaware to the city of Burbank, California. If you could see all the lettuce leaves I have consumed in my lifetime, piled leaf on leaf and dripping in their oils, their vinegar, their mayonnaise, and their roquefort dressings, you would be absolutely appalled. But, bored as I am with green things on the table — bored because despite their goodness they have been too plentiful and too easily come by — I am not bored on those occasions when, like Candide, I cultivate my garden, get my hands into the dirt, and smell God's good fragrance in the loam. To watch the power of living things like salad greens and string beans pushing their way out of the seed, up through the earth, reaching down for water and up for sunlight with an irresistible drive, is to realize afresh the power of life on this planet. It is a reinvigorating and religious experience. It is impossible to watch seeds grow into plants and flowers and fruit and still to believe cynically in a mere mechanistic explanation for such a life drive. To get back to the seed, the earth, and the root is to reëxperience the fun and meaning of life.

In the same way that I have become bored with salad, we have all become bored with words, printed words. We have seen too many

## PETER BEILENSON

of them, we have read too many of them, we have measured, or proofread, or edited, or sold, too many of them. We have forgotten their primal power, their irresistible living urge. We have forgotten that sincere authors have not put them down on paper because of two cents a word or 10 per cent of the retail gross — that they have been written (in the best cases) out of human necessity, human ebullience, human passion, human sympathy, or human understanding. The industrial book-printing world cannot ever think of words in that way. It must always think of them as areas of type 22 by 28 picas, as numbers of pages which do or do not make up a multiple of thirty-two, as units of sale at \$3.00 less 40 per cent.

To go back to nature and become an amateur printer in such an industrialized book world is like working in the garden when you are bored with salad. You really get back to the roots of words. If you are a genuine amateur printer, and set the type and print the pages yourself, you actually can share in the creative agonies and satisfactions of the author. For you put down his words, letter for letter in your type-stick, just as he did with his quill or his battered Remington. The best way on earth to appreciate an author and his creative spirit (or for that matter to realize more quickly the faults in him) is to pick him up letter by letter from a California case. An even more acid test is to distribute the type after printing him. In such a case you pick up half a dozen lines of type at once and work backwards, distributing the last word of the last line first. It is a revelation how the hollowness of an author can show up under this treatment. It is especially cruel to poets, for every word which is not really necessary, which is there just for padding or for a rhythm or a rhyme, becomes as noticeable as the well-known sore thumb. But the genuine, sincere author with a pure style stands up beautifully under such treatment, and has his reward in your pleasure at this discovery.

After you have set your author's type you must make up his pages, choose his decorations or illustrations, and set his headings. You must decide whether to stretch him to twenty-four pages or condense him to sixteen. You must buy his paper, lock up his pages in your chase, make him ready, curse your press which is printing him,



## *the amateur printer*

apply your ink to his words, and impress him for posterity. Perhaps you will thereafter fold him, sew him, and encase him in boards.

In so doing, you become, to the extent of sixteen or twenty-four pages, in an edition of one hundred or three hundred copies, God. You have created something which did not exist before, and which would not have existed save for your thinking brain and tired back and dirty hands. True, you have not created Heaven and Earth, and you have undoubtedly worked at your creation for more than the original quota of six days. But anyway you have given the world something which was at first only words you loved, and is now a whole, real book, which you love all the more because it is your book, your child, your embodiment of those words. That is the fun and satisfaction of being an amateur. In our printing world there is no other satisfaction equal to it.

Good old Ralph Waldo Emerson was mortally right when he wrote down his doctrine of Compensation. His doctrine of Compensation says that every pleasure carries some penalty, every gain some kind of loss. Every duty accepted gives you a satisfaction, and every satisfaction received involves you in a duty. Thus far I have written of the satisfaction of your being an amateur printer. Now I wish to write of your duty and obligation.

The amateur book printer has a duty which, if he will accept it, will in the long run return to him the greatest satisfaction. This duty is to teach the professional, by example, about the outer cultural world, and to experiment for him in matters of printing style. Now this is directly contrary to what ninety out of one hundred current amateurs would seem to think, and I must therefore beg their ninety pardons if I disturb their habits of mind.

Most amateurs either don't trouble their minds about problems of printing style at all, or else they fall too easily into the habit of working in the Colonial style, or Venetian style, or some other historical style, rather than in a contemporary one. Maybe they do so for the psychological reasons suggested in the preceding article. And maybe not. I am too set in my diction to learn the trick of talking in psycho-

## PETER BEILENSON

logical terms. I would express their case like this: Amateurs who work in historical styles do so because they are romantics, romantics who turn away from the impersonal machine world of the present for a breath of the more human and glamorous-seeming past. I sympathize with such an instinct, and hold myself ready to defend any man who seeks to re-inject a human element into the printing craft.

The trouble is, such amateurs think that because printing in the past was done by hand, and because there is something more satisfying and human about printing by hand, they must therefore work in an antique printing style and make Colonial and Venetian books in order to enjoy themselves. This is a false syllogism. I strongly recommend printing by hand to amateurs because it will give them greater satisfaction, not because it will make their books look like antiques. It is too easy to fabricate such antiques, and to do so will in the long run give you less enjoyment than making something which in style is original and new.

As a matter of fact it is already too late to think in terms of revivals and reproductions. In printing the revival habit started over a hundred years ago with Whittingham and Pickering, when they dusted off the forgotten Caslon types and the eighteenth-century style. It has been going on ever since, and reached a climax of understanding and skill in our century at the hands of Updike, Rogers, Rollins, Goudy, and others. This revivalism was a kind of search for humanism, and a kind of rebellion against commercialism. These men were not unique. In every generation since 1800, in every art and craft, every field of thought, the Industrial Revolution has prompted men to make the same search backward for satisfactions which the modern world did not seem to offer.

Too many of our amateurs are still making the same search, although the Industrial Revolution is well over one hundred years old, all the necessary backward searching has been done, and all the historical styles have been reworked. Our predecessors have made it unnecessary for us to go through the process once again. We can see now that their work was an escape perhaps for them, but that it can never be a durable way of creative realization for us. From now

## *the amateur printer*

on, we must join up with the forward-looking crowd who think they can build a new world.

The book-printing industry has not been very forward-looking in matters of style. With the exception of a few printers and designers, book printers have been unhealthily backward. Therefore the time is ripe for amateur book-experimentalists to prod and teach them. The amateur can do it.

He is, or should be, a man with interests in other fields of culture than his own. He is aware already of what has been done in painting and music, in fabrics and furniture design, in architecture too — most important of all. He must now help printing to develop its own new styles, equivalent to those in other fields. That he can do so is evidenced by the fact that in recent years the greatest strides forward have been taken not by the professionals but by people who in a sense are amateurs, but who have known how to apply modern ideas from other fields.

The Bauhaus group first became notable, between the wars, by applying the functional theories of modern architecture to the printed page. The Black Sun Press and Harrison of Paris applied the ideas of Monroe Wheeler and others who were stimulated by modern painting. There may be similar publishing projects in this country today, but they are not yet influential. The most effective, most vocal, most lovable of contemporary American influences is that rugged individual Merle Armitage, whose ideas have been influential in shaping my own attitude. Such people all know that the world has changed; that it will never turn back again; and that it is up to us to catch on to the flying coattails of Today. I urge other amateurs to join the ranks of these apostles of change. It will be a great day for all of us when ninety out of one hundred are experimentalists, and not the other way around.

Of course in urging amateurs to develop new styles, I am not recommending any easy hobby. It is simple, but dull, to copy an old style. It is hard, but exciting, to work out a new one. And while you are working at it, you must expect cynical observers to give your experiments the adjective "wacky"; you must expect certain curious

## PETER BEILINSON

kinds of people to praise your work for the wrong reasons; and you must expect alternating moods of conceit and frustration. The proofs you gloat over at night will become commonplace by dawn. Your wife may go back to her mother in rage and despair. You may need sleeping pills.

You will make misjudgments about the intelligence of ordinary readers. You will make mistakes of taste. You will find it too easy to get an effect by means of shock, and you will forget that any book, even a twenty-first-century book, must be a coherent unit. And you will often, since there are no highway markers for the explorer, feel lonely and discouraged, and want to go back to the old familiar well-traveled roads again.

But if you go through with it, or even if you just play with it sometimes as a hobby, you can have great fun. For it will put you out in the open, free to please yourself, with the boss and the customer left far behind. You can be subtle or bold, as you feel the urge, for you do not have to please the great common denominator, the common man. You can advance your own work by looking to other fields of creation, enjoying and profiting by the experiments going on in them. You can feel yourself a part of the whole forward-looking culture of your day, and not someone off in a little forgotten corner.

And, if you do strike a vein with the least glitter of real gold in it, you will become rich indeed. For you will have become a creator in a new sense; your duty done as an amateur will be compensated with a twenty-four-carat satisfaction. At such a moment of realization you will have earned the privilege to rest and feel content. As on a seventh day after six of creation, standing late at night with bloodshot eyes and inky fingers and aching back in a paper-littered room, you have become a creator. You have not merely escaped from the flattened monotony of the machine age — you have become one of the shapers of its future. More power to you in that work!

# 4 PROSPECT

*an extensive view*





*as the etcher sees it*

## SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN

I AM NOT AT ALL SURE THAT AN ETCHER DESERVES TO BE INCLUDED in a symposium devoted primarily to books. I am conscious of being something of an interloper. However, I will admit that I have a theme. I have a theme that has been jingling around back here in the dim recesses of what I plaintively call my mentality; a little theme about books and artists, about the relationship between print-makers and the fine art of the book.

This little idea has been hanging around for about twenty-five years, and in that space of time, off and on, I have collared some of my friends in a defenseless corner and started to talk to them about this particular mania of mine. They are always bored to death and manage to escape me after the first few paragraphs, either by changing the subject, darting from the room, or feigning illness.

Actually I don't think it is such a boring theme. It is simply this: wouldn't it be a boon to American publishing if our print-makers and our makers of fine books would form an artistic partnership to create fine limited editions? Close collaboration between these allied arts has every hope of success, and there is a strong probability that such an artistic alliance would be blessed by charming, comely offspring. By limited editions, I mean editions of one hundred or one hundred and fifty signed and numbered copies, printed by letterpress on fine paper and illustrated by original hand-pulled impressions from the copper plate or the lithographic stone. It should be emphasized that this is not projected as a new or original idea. We have produced a few books of this very sort. But it is fair to say that the idea has rarely been pursued, and that the mechanical processes have pretty well strangled the hand-pulled illustrative print. The original etching has such intrinsic merit and artistic appeal that it

## SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN

will not be exterminated, however. It still offers an almost unexplored avenue to the makers of fine books.

To give you an idea of how this artistic partnership might thrive, I am taking the liberty of being somewhat reminiscent, and of recalling my first contact with such illustrated books some twenty-five years ago. (Here is where they usually begin to fade gently from the room.) This was in Paris, when I was timidly exploring the art of lithography. I went to an ingratiating and delightful old lithographer by the name of Gaston Dorfinant who had a picturesque studio, where he welcomed vagrant artists, on the Ile-de-la-Cité, within a stone's throw of Notre Dame. I told him of my desire to do a portfolio of lithographs of the old views of the city of Paris; this is as moth-eaten an idea as any lithographer has ever come up with, but Gaston was kind enough to receive me with open arms and to put me to work.

His workshop overlooked the Seine, and a silent parade of canal boats. Gaston said, "Now I will put you here at the corner table where you can look out the window and see the canal boats as they go by." Then he gave me a little table and showed me how to work on lithographic stone without getting my oily hands on it; he also gave me instructions on how to look at my drawing upside down in a mirror, so I could see in reverse — a few little things like that.

He said, "Now make yourself at home." I did. And then I began to gaze around me at the amazing collection of people who were doing the same thing as I was. There were about six or seven tables in the Gaston studio, and at the table next to mine was a mousy little person, a sweet-faced and rather frightened little woman with an extraordinarily gifted crayon. Her draftsmanship was superb, and her work had a haunting, melancholy quality which has since made her famous. She drew sad, tender, wide-eyed faces on her stone, faces that haunted you with their pensive delicacy. She was working at that time on *The Beggar's Opera*, and I looked spellbound at some of her illustrations. I soon learned that she was Mariette Lydis, an artist who has now established herself in the very front rank of graphic artists.

At the table next to her was a different type of person, and the most vocal artist in the group. He was an Italian gentleman by the name of Michele — at least we called him Michele. Michele was not an artist of the book. He specialized in posters, but poster art was a mere sideline with him. Fundamentally he was a musician. His forte was opera, and he knew a dozen of them by heart, from the opening chorus to the grand finale. Puccini, Massenet, and Offenbach were his favorites, and he made a habit of singing through an entire opera in one day as he worked. An opera a day — this was quite an education in itself!

At the adjacent table was a plump Frenchman with a black Homburg who looked as though he owned a garage. He was Luc-Albert Moreau, and his favorite subjects were wrestlers, prize fighters, and vaguely sinister characters from Montmartre. There was an indefinable unhealthiness about his work which was strangely pleasant.

One day a mysterious visitor arrived, a gentleman with a flowing black tie and a Vandyke beard — a man who looked very distinguished. He was determined to make lithographic stone yield a wash drawing, instead of the customary crayon-like effect. The resourceful Gaston worked with him long and patiently, using diluted lithographic inks instead of crayons, and finally produced some most remarkable wash drawings, rich, velvety, and dramatic. After they had achieved their process, I learned to my enchantment that the gentleman was Monsieur Vlaminck, a towering figure in modern French art. My eyes bulged somewhat at that, but they really popped out of their sockets one morning when an almond-eyed little man appeared with a portfolio under his arm. He had huge horn-rimmed spectacles, black bangs, and two objects which resembled curtain rings hanging from his ears. He was Monsieur Foujita, the Japanese artist who had become one of the most *mondain* of Parisians, and he was working on six lithographs to illustrate a somewhat neurotic book on Montparnasse.

All of these personalities, except the operatic Italian, were working at book illustration. I noticed that nobody was making lithographs for exhibition purposes at all, and it was at that time that my

## SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN

eyes began to open to the potentialities of the illustrated books of fine editions. Each one of these men would perfect their drawing on stone, whereupon the stone would be prepared for the impression in the next room, and Gaston Dorfinant would then take over. In the back room were two hand presses, and on the commodious shelves were stacks of neat packages, each containing 110 or 115 sheets of fine, hand-made, deckle-edged paper; each sheet representing four pages of a book in progress. These sheets had already received the text, and were ready for hand-pulled lithographs from Gaston's presses. There were ten or fifteen extra sheets for wastage, but the skillful Gaston never spoiled that many. His press creaked away ten hours a day, turning out the quality of printing which the human hand alone can insure.

My next contact with book illustration came shortly afterwards, when I was ankle-deep splashing around in etching technique. I became a visitor to the studio of Monsieur Edmond Rigal, a plate printer who lived in Fontenay-aux-Roses, an unlovely suburb of Paris. Monsieur Rigal was not very personable. He rather resembled the startled creature which scampers away when you pick up the end of a water-soaked log. But he was a consummate workman, a great craftsman, and he had the gift of infinite patience. He was a master etching printer, with half a dozen assistants capable of printing clean, workmanlike etchings, drypoints, aquatints, engravings, and mezzotints for book illustration. A dozen or more French artists came to Monsieur Rigal to supervise the selection of a "bon à tirer," the model proof to be used in printing their limited editions. The first man I met here was a Napoleonic figure with bangs, pince-nez, and a perfectly heroic capacity for work. He was Monsieur Decaris, at that time the youngest man ever to win the Grand Prix de Rome, and beyond question one of the great engravers of the twentieth century. He was a magnificent little figure, with fascinating, enormous shoulders, no hips, and practically no feet: a perfect isosceles triangle, and a genius! His engravings were sweeping and silvery, full of motion but devoid of humor. He illustrated impressive tomes by Chateaubriand, Ronsard, and Shakespeare, and his plates



were so deeply dug with engraving that once you had taken an impression and allowed it to dry the ink would stand up in thick ridges exactly as it does on calling cards; if you rubbed your finger nails across it hard you would make a noise like sandpaper. Later he showed his versatility by designing stamps for the French government, among them the stamp of the ill-fated *Normandie*. When I heard from him recently he admitted that he had enough work ahead to keep him occupied for the next thirty years!

The second man that fascinated me in this group was a not-so-mad Russian, Monsieur Alexieff. He was tall and thin and extraordinarily gifted in the art of aquatint, having explored its possibilities as have few etchers. He took almost insolent liberties with the process, making it yield effects without precedent. His passions in life were two: Edgar Allan Poe and Baudelaire, two men who have an affinity in looks as well as in writing. He illustrated many of Poe's works with his own peculiar brand of haunting aquatint. His illustrations for "The Fall of the House of Usher" still give me nightmares on unspecified nights; it is one of the most unforgettable series of illustrations that I have ever seen.

Another book illustrator of talent was Monsieur Boussaingault, who appeared one day with a piercing-eyed gentleman — to my enchantment I had a chance to shake hands with the great André Gide, something I have never forgotten.

Finally, in this particular studio, there was a jolly, plump individual named Monsieur Sylvain Sauvage, an illustrator whose specialty was far from austere. I suppose the Watch and Ward Society would take a dim view of Monsieur Sauvage. While the majority of rare French editions dealt with the accepted straight-laced classics, I will admit that a certain number were designed to bring a parting flicker of contentment to very old and very rich bibliophiles who still retained a trace of the evergreen. Monsieur Sauvage contributed more than his share to brightening the twilight of these aging gentlemen. He came to be a very celebrated illustrator indeed. He had begun his career as an architect, but soon found it difficult to face a drawing board. The marginal notes on his tracing paper consisted

## SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN

almost entirely of sprightly maidens being chased by Centaurs — so he took up book illustration, with immense success.

Here again, all the print-makers in this studio were engaged in illustrating books. In Monsieur Rigal's press room were the same neat packages of paper, 110 to the package, awaiting the impression of hand-wiped copper plates.

The excitement of book making finally led me to undertake the publication of a richly illustrated *Song of Songs* (also a trite idea), illustrated by drypoints by Clark Fay, and this enterprise opened up another vista — the printing shop of a noted French typographer, Maurice Darantière. Monsieur Darantière was a man who demanded perfection from his printers, and usually obtained it. His foreman was a moon-faced individual who knew not a single word of English, but was called upon to set the first edition of *Ulysses* by James Joyce entirely by hand. This was the edition published by Shakespeare and Company. It would be flippant to say that ignorance of the English language was an asset in this case, but, at all events, this remarkable man set the entire book with only five discernible errors. Besides immaculate presswork, Monsieur Darantière had a studio given over to the art of the "pochoir," or stencil. We have a new-born equivalent now called serigraph, based on the silk screen, and usually employing opaque colors — a process which was used for streetcar advertisements here twenty-five years ago, but which is now dignified by that new name of serigraph. The stencil work in Darantière's studio was more subtle, however. The colors were clear and transparent, giving the effect of a watercolor wash. It is possible to lay one of these washes over the other by means of simple stencils, so that you ultimately get a most delightful superimposition of fifteen or twenty or twenty-five colors if you wish. You can be luxurious beyond all possibilities by this method, when one considers the cost of doing the same thing by a mechanical process, and you get a fantastic range of color. At that particular time, the stencil experts were working on an elaborate volume illustrated by Schmidt, the accepted French master of the stencil. Not only was his work done in sixteen colors, but it was printed on beautiful new parchment.

This posed no problem to the master of the "pochoir," for the creamy goatskin took color beautifully, but it was a tough one for the typographical printer. To get a clean impression on goatskin is not easy, because different goats have different thicknesses of skin. It was necessary to calculate the thickness of each sheet with a sensitive little measuring device, separate the sheets in piles of about the same thickness, and adjust the press for each batch in order to obtain the perfect impression. This illustrates the extremes to which such craftsmen and artists will go to obtain a truly fine limited edition.

I have been frightfully wordy in sketching this verbal picture of book illustration as it flourishes in France, and as it might flourish over here. Is the picture too idyllic, too Utopian, too farfetched in this hurried generation? I have a feeling that it is not, and that American print-makers, printers, and publishers could establish a relationship quite as pleasant and productive at this time.

The print-maker and the typographer have grown apart, but once they depended upon each other. Prints owe their inception to the invention of movable type. A book without illustrations was unthinkable in those incunabular days when the memory of illuminated parchments was still fresh, and woodblocks became an accepted form of illustration almost overnight. It would be pleasant for the print-maker if we would revert to that early kinship, and allow him to turn to books as an outlet for his talent. He has a great deal to offer. There is something basically real and compelling about an original print from the copper plate or the lithographic stone. The authentic plate mark, the veil of ink left by hand printing, the integrity of the etched line, all of these are still just a little beyond the mechanical processes. Often they contribute an intrinsic value to a fine book which even outweighs the virtue of fine printing, paper, and binding.

From a practical point of view the copper-plate illustration is still feasible, although the old generation of plate printers is fading away rapidly. Still, there are plenty of skilled craftsmen who can turn out a good clean-wiped impression in a minute or two, provided they are given a well-etched plate. Needless to say, they do not have the

## SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN

time or skill to indulge in the rich atmospheric skies made by deftly laying a veil of ink with the flat of the hand, as a handful of English plate printers still can do. Nor can they spend much time on *retrousage* or wiping out high lights. But the American etcher has a staunch and willing companion, the plate printer, in case he turns to book illustration.

As perhaps you know, etchings are pretty much in the doldrums. Maybe it is because wolfish, Esquire-type jokes have been cracked about them for the past decade. It is certainly farfetched to believe that any Casanova would dangle a Bone or a McBey as bait, but the wisecrack has stuck and some people still snicker when you say etching. The portfolio collector is becoming very scarce, and the canny investor who put his funds in this kind of engraved paper, instead of another kind with mechanical scrolls and promises of South American riches, has been having a tough time. Prices in the auction room have not held up well. In the 1920's (those beautiful days) etchings galloped along with polo ponies, but in the sad 1940's they are economic or commercial wallflowers, alas!

Yet the intrinsic ability of our print-makers has taken no such nose dive. I feel sure of that. A visit to a national print show may leave today's visitor slightly perplexed, but he won't deny the skill and vitality of many of our etchers, even though the red stars indicating sales are pathetically few. It is a natural step for such etchers to turn to books as a means of survival.

The young etcher of today, if he is to achieve economic independence, must uncover a part-time teaching assignment or dabble in commercial art or find himself a rich wife. He might avoid all of these desperate expedients if he could turn to the warm embrace of book illustration.



## *the new forms—and books*

### MERLE ARMITAGE

MANY OF US WHO LOVE THE BOOK ARE GREATLY TROUBLED.

But we are not without hope as we face the fact that the contemporary book is in danger, perhaps the greatest danger it has ever encountered. The book, as we know it, has lost its direction, its leadership. It faces new and potent rivals for its place as the king of all media of communication.

This loss of leadership in the arts and crafts is serious enough. But the book has even become anonymous among its fellows. On shelves or tables, anywhere we look today, it is difficult to discern which is the novel, the scientific treatise, the autobiography, or the cook book. We cannot recognize them because they do not dress the part.

A basic question confronts us: Where is the book that reflects the knowledge, the eloquence of design, the new spirit, the *necessary* compelling qualities that will meet the challenge of today?

At this moment the book's competitors are meeting this challenge. Magazines, particularly, are meeting it. Newspapers, like magazines and other media that stem from the book-source—the printing press—often reflect the vigorous new spirit of today. In addition, the radio, recordings, motion pictures, and television represent new concepts of communication—rough, rowdy, and insistent competitors with which the book has never before had to jostle.

Why this concern? Why should we care whether the book today returns to its original course as pace-setter for all forms of communication? Why do we have that compulsion to expect a book to reflect our knowledge, our spirit—the qualities in us that can and will meet the challenge of today?

To answer these and myriads of similar questions it may be worth while to take a brief glance at what the book has meant to mankind. What is its place in our scheme of living, its purpose among the arts?



## MERLE ARMITAGE

A book is the end product of a mysterious and fecund nature — a nature that grows trees in a forest, cotton on a plant, and wool on a sheep. It's the product of men who devise and operate the mills that change these elements into paper; of the engineers who build the presses, and the technicians and craftsmen who operate them. It's the product of the typographers, designers, and printers who take the world's endlessly increasing knowledge and record it in type.

The book has formed the heroic escalator that has lifted man from the black pit of ignorance and slavery into a world of enlightenment and freedom. A book can be both a repository and an *expression* of man's most exalted advances in aesthetics, science, philosophy, and ethics. No other thing created or developed by man has these universal possibilities.

From the hand-written and illuminated books of antiquity, the book took its first great step forward with the invention of movable type. It has taken many more forward steps, with the invention of half-tone engravings, of the rotary press, of typesetting machines, of offset, and other new printing processes. Each development has increased the power and the usefulness of the book.

The book, until our time, has been an accurate reflection of its particular period in history. We have such obvious examples of style and attitude in Gutenberg, Bodoni, and Cobden-Sanderson, to name but three of the galaxy of great designers and printers who have enriched the libraries of the world. Not only in the content of their books but also in their visual treatment we observe the characteristic modes that governed these men in fully expressing themselves.

Then, at about the beginning of the twentieth century, there occurred an aesthetic explosion unparalleled in history. Within a remarkably brief period there were simultaneous and radical changes in art, music, literature, and architecture.

This aesthetic explosion paralleled a similar revolution among the physical and psychological sciences. There appeared the works of Freud, Jung, and Adler, and the behaviorist and Gestalt psychologies. Changes and new developments were occurring in mathemati-

### *the new forms—and books*

cal logic, colloidal chemistry, neurology, biology, psychiatry, aerodynamics, and mathematical physics.

At the time, these changes and developments were new or had taken startling turns—upsetting dogmas that had been accepted without question for centuries.

These new horizons of thought and action were opened with the help of dynamic changes in means of transportation and communication, and through materials and products manufactured by machinery. The impact of those changes has been profound. But the changes seem to have left the book—as a reflection of its times—far behind.

Consider the other arts. Painters rebelled against the reduction of painting to the menial status of handmaiden to the sentimental and banal. Cézanne, working alone and unrecognized by his contemporaries, was a giant who used color, construction, and form to return art to its vital purposes. Others, including the unprecedented Picasso, went back to such simple forms as the cube, the cone, and the cylinder; and cubism, with its powerful emanations, was born. Kandinsky, among other progressives, contributed a new sense of space relationships. And so painting will probably never again return to its tight, unimaginative, subject-matter-burdened state.

Literature, floundering in the word-ridden Victorian swamps of formless romanticism or meaningless imitations of past glories, was suddenly galvanized by the appearance of such figures as James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, E. E. Cummings, Thomas Mann. The experiments by Joyce and Stein in expressing the ever-shifting kaleidoscopic impressions on the stream of consciousness are not candidates for universal acceptance. But the influence of these writers on the authors of our day has been both healthy and profound.

Here, in America, there was another awakening. Americans had built their state capitols in imitation of St. Peter's in Rome. Their libraries, banks, and public buildings were erected with apologies to Greek and Roman styles. And their homes reflected all that was most hideously grand in European architectural conceptions. Suddenly, Americans opened their eyes to Louis Sullivan. He and his fellow

## MERLE ARMITAGE

innovators — notably Frank Lloyd Wright — brought us that cheerful information that the cornice was dead, and that a home could be a place of sunlight, air, style, and comfortable living.

Diaghilev, emerging from behind the aesthetic iron curtain of mysterious Russia, burst upon a receptive Europe with a new concept of ballet. Choreography, music, scenario, and *décor* were welded into a synthesis known as the Russian Ballet. From this scintillating organization came the most compelling new influence on the music of our time, the endlessly inventive and refreshing works of Stravinsky. Although jazz, an American concept, has influenced all popular music, it is from Debussy, Ravel, Schönberg, Bartók, Varese, Stravinsky, and others that have come the most important serious mutations.

We must not forget that for many centuries man made his *only* important statements through the arts. But within an astonishingly short period the world was confronted by an industrial, mechanical, and scientific development as subtle, complex, and in many ways more potent than the arts had been in molding the future of man. If the arts were to keep pace with material achievements and the mental expansions of twentieth-century man, they must, of necessity, make a similar advance. The challenge was met. Men of art worthy of their responsibilities and opportunities were at hand. Even our machines of strict utility have become more appropriate to their uses, and more effective as machines, through the ministrations of Raymond Loewy, Walter Dorwin Teague, and other industrial designers.

In this fifty-year vortex of creativeness what has happened to the book? What has happened to this collaborator with each one of these new manifestations, the one common denominator to them all? Do we find the book answering the challenge that faced all the arts and responding to the same opportunities?

The answer is No. The book today is, for the most part, of another generation. Most designers, printers, publishers, and others responsible for the decadence of the book, seem singularly unaware of today's problems. I have read arguments, on the part of responsible

## *the new forms—and books*

members of the profession, that books are not sold by their appearance or by their content. They maintain that a book sells simply by word-of mouth reports on whether it is good or bad. In other words, they ignore the whole science of modern merchandising. But even if the problem were fully understood, some elements in the present organization of book production are faulty. It is obvious that when a publisher purchases a manuscript and orders it designed by a man who will never read it, and who in turn commissions a dust-jacket from a man who knows little of the book but its title, only confusion and illiterate design can result.

Yet badly printed, illiterately designed books, which often have dishonestly flamboyant dust-jackets, are commonplaces. These ill-equipped books are expected to compete with every exciting contemporary device; to fight for a share of the little time most people have for acquiring information or enjoying diversion.

Many of our celebrated typographers and designers have given books a certain style. W. A. Dwiggins infuses into his unique designs an abstract or Oriental atmosphere. Solid dignity is achieved by Carl Purington Rollins. T. M. Cleland is an aristocrat, obviously in love with the eighteenth century, and there is about the works of Bruce Rogers the cool, timeless quality of Greek sculpture. Other men and women, including the Beilensons, Ward Ritchie, and the designers for many university presses, have made distinguished contributions, or have improvised successfully on old themes. But these are the rare exceptions.

Far too many of our American books speak with an English accent. The eminent Stanley Morison has said: "The typography of books, apart from the category of narrowly limited editions, requires an obedience to convention which is almost absolute." In a time of such obvious transition, Morison advocates holding fast to dullness and monotony. One might properly ask: Where has holding fast to tradition placed the British Empire today?

History should have taught us that the only dangerous thing in the world is a static condition. Anything that is free and moving is obviously alive and healthy. Granted, a book too difficult to read is



## MERLE ARMITAGE

useless. But the attitude that printing must serve *only* the function of readability is like saying that the only function of clothing is to cover nakedness or that the only use of architecture is to provide shelter. Such attitudes are obviously unacceptable, impractical, and can lead only to sterility and death.

Unfortunately, the dominant characteristic of American bookmaking today is a return to the styles and attitudes of the past. In painting or music such a movement is known as neoclassicism. In a country as young and vigorous as America this is not merely an unfortunate loss of direction, it is a tragic mistake. The printing of today and tomorrow will not reach new horizons by looking backward. To go back means that we take the well-traveled boulevards and abandon the uncharted course through the wilderness of discovery and invention. Looking backward means forsaking adventure, experimentation, research, and the opportunity to make new and significant statements allied to our particular times. Backward-looking is a basic menace to the growth, health, and the potentialities of design, typography, and the graphic arts. It makes us seek only identification with periods, attitudes, and purposes alien to our own attitudes and purposes. It denies our particular period and admits our poverty of invention and paucity of spirit.

If we are not resourceful or inventive enough to capture the vitality, the aesthetics, the immense scope of *our* age, let us, at least, not return to modes already once removed from primal sources. Caxton, Plantin, Baskerville, Bodoni, Cobden-Sanderson, and other men have left us monuments of typography and printing that were created in particular periods. But to copy them is to identify our work with attitudes and manners false to our way of life.

If we **MUST** go back, let us reëxamine the art of archaic man, the *timeless* elements of design. The aesthetic vigor of the archaic Greek, the Egyptian, the Assyrian, the Mayan, and the Navajo can be a constant source of refreshment and revitalization in times of transition. And transition is the dominant characteristic of our day.

The attempts to avoid — and evade — really contemporary design



## *the new forms—and books*

and typography are both humorous and frightening. Shoddy examples of bookmaking are hidden under sparkling dust-jackets reminiscent of the extravagant label on a patent-medicine bottle. Forgetting that of all man's creations a book should be an integrated and honest whole, we read that "dust-wrapper and title page have been designed by so and so." Yet a Cadillac advertisement proclaiming that "front fenders and steering wheel have been designed by so and so" would be an impossible absurdity. Another evasion is an almost pathological preoccupation with craftsmanship. Craftsmanship is certainly one of the most important and necessary elements in the making of books. But in this day of specialized, highly developed machinery and trained technicians, craftsmanship should be taken for granted. Certainly craftsmanship alone is not the answer. It is the *design* of the airplane, plus the exquisite craftsmanship in its construction, that makes it fly! With a tailor, excellent materials are only half the battle; it is the use of the materials—their cut, fit, and style that makes or mars the result.

Men who admire the functional appearance of a DC6 or a streamliner often see nothing incongruous in a book appropriate to the Gay Nineties.

What is the cause of this confusion? Why this inability to keep abreast of the times, this evasion of responsibility on the part of one of the oldest and most noble of arts and crafts?

Anything that survives in the mass-circulation necessities of our time must obviously be governed by the laws of economics and be managed as a business. But along the road—in the transition from a craft to an industry and then to a business—bookmaking has lost some of the elements that will insure its healthy future.

As a manager of many artists and organizations, I have the most wholesome respect and the keenest admiration for the managers of our industries and our affairs. They, too, are often artists.

But the *well-conducted* industry has a very large and important and respected research department. It comes to grips with each day's new advance on the part of its competitors or its potential

## MERLE ARMITAGE

competitors. So, too, should the making of books be a balanced fusing of craft, art, *and* business.

The world is about to enter upon one of the most gigantic battles of modern times. This battle will join when the new axis of light metals and plastics comes to grips with the old axis of coal and iron. Many fortunes will be lost and made. Our whole economy will tremble and writhe and expand to meet the changes this new concept of manufacturing will surely bring. The book is bound to be subjected to further changes. Even the physical materials of paper and cloth will give way to more durable, handsomer, and more appropriate substances.

What, then, is the answer? What will insure the future of the book? How can it meet the test of survival as a tool of communication in a visual age? We are living in a time when the impact of visual communication is greater than ever before. Pictures and advertisements, billboards and architecture — everything man makes has been subjected to the scrutiny of men and women who consciously or unconsciously read a new language. For design *is* a language. There are many illiterate designs, but that does not cancel out this fact or the trend.

Certain highly successful new projects are now under way which should be watched carefully by everyone interested in the future of the book. Picture magazines, of which *Life* and *Look* are the chief exponents, have quickly taken the lead. This was inevitable. From the Cro-Magnon man, who made pictures in the Spanish and African caves — or the aborigines who made pictographs on the walls of our southwestern canyons — to the modern viewer of billboards, motion pictures, and television, man has always been visual minded. The quickest way to tell a story is through a visual treatment of it.

As Art Director of *Look*, my constant effort has been so to relate picture, text, and design that each enhances the other. And from these three fused elements — picture, text, and design — I attempt a true synthesis. This aim will probably never be completely realized. But it seeks so to design a page that a reader will be sub-

## *the new forms—and books*

consciously, or consciously, aware of its meaning before he has read a word of its text. This goal is worth shooting for, no matter how impossible are its chances of accomplishment. That principle cannot, of course, be applied to every page in a book, but it most certainly can be applied to the book as a whole.

We, as yet, know very little about the grammar of design — that important, but elusive, element or force. For instance, a cross is the most static of designs; movement to the right or left, or up or down, is arrested by its vertical and horizontal forms. And why is a straight, unbroken horizontal line, such as the meeting place of sky and sea, one of the most restful things to contemplate? Possibly the feeling of security is best suggested by flat surfaces because when we crawled about as infants we learned that floors were safe. And, again, red may be a vital and exciting color to us because it is the color of blood; while, indubitably, blue means distance to us because it is the color of the infinite sky. And there is a sensation of elation in the downward and upward swoop of a swallow — the thrill of recovery.

In our studies of the power of space and form relationships we have come again to a truth known to the ancients and to certain learned men in all ages. This truth is that the only uninteresting problem is the problem that can be completely solved. Tension is one of the important elements in design in our time. There are many others — so many that we have only begun to explore the many laws underlying our response to design stimuli. No system is readily at hand to solve the problems. It is not a matter of formulas.

Nor is the *application* of so-called “modern” arrangements to printing the remedy for its ills. Placing a shiny streamlined casing on an old engine does not increase its horsepower or its efficiency. “Modern” is not something you can put on or take off as you would a hat. The only honest approach to typography and design is a consideration of what the advertisement, the magazine page, or the text of the book is to accomplish. From that consideration should spring a corresponding attitude in design.

## MERLE ARMITAGE

Between World War I and World War II there developed a movement in Germany known as the Bauhaus. The principles which animated this group were sound, and its influence for good has spread all over the civilized world. But many followers of the Bauhaus have frozen the work of its members into a style, which they have imposed upon many projects with unfortunate results. A style cannot be successfully imposed — it must come from within — it must be the outward expression of inner content.

There is one generalization, one rule, however, that, through its very vagueness and looseness, can guide us to the book of tomorrow. Gilbert and Sullivan stated the problem very succinctly in *The Mikado*: "Let the punishment fit the crime." A more modern-minded man proclaimed this powerful, simple fact when he said "form follows function." In the final analysis, design is a matter of integration.

To design a book, first read the book. Get a clear idea of the *meaning* of the text. Then, through reason, intuition, or what you will, let that meaning permeate every step that is taken. Let it guide every selection that is made, give it freedom to be original. Let the *meaning* of the book speak through its physical characteristics and its space relationships. Armed with all the technical knowledge and experience that modern man possesses, each book should then be approached as though it were the very first book to be made embracing its particular subject. Memories of other books can be inhibiting hurdles. But no man or woman is likely to make the true book of our time who is not aware of the related influences that animate the arts and the engineering of 1949.

The true books of tomorrow will be made by young men and women. Many of these young people are held back by the cynical conservatism that seems to permeate the printing industry. Young men and women of ideas and ambition, the type once attracted to the world of printing and books, are increasingly absent from its shops and offices. The apprentice problem is one of the most vexing in the industry. But what youth, who faces the opportunities now offered in a dozen contemporary professions, will associate himself

*the new forms—and books*

with a world still in the grip of such minutiae as traditional margins, habitual arrangements, and so on? What vigorous young man will enter an old world that is outraged if someone uses Caslon italics with sans-serif caps in making a point compatible with a text? The world of books could do itself the greatest favor by inviting these young people into its councils—for they have the answer. Youth almost alone fully understands the underlying influences of this grand, but precarious, period of transition.

The book, which has always reflected, interpreted, and given a kind of permanence to various periods of man's history, asks us to be true to its traditions. Its traditions are not imitative. Its traditions teach us, if they teach us anything, to be true to ourselves.



## *tomorrow's readers*

### J. DONALD ADAMS

MY VERY ACCEPTANCE OF THE SUBJECT WHICH HAS BEEN assigned me would seem to indicate that I am of an optimistic disposition. To speak of tomorrow's readers in a world increasingly dominated by comics, charts, radio, and television is to take more for granted than was ever assumed by those discredited oracles of our period, the Ropers and the Gallups. Recently there appeared in our most distinguished newspaper what was labeled as an applause chart — a graph designed to show how the Congress had reacted to President Truman's state of the union message. I think it took me considerably longer — and I am what the psychologists describe I think as a visual-minded person — to follow the ups and downs of that reaction as represented by the rise and dip of a heavy black line, than it would have done to read a few succinct sentences in which I was told at what points the Congress applauded most or least. Sometimes it would seem that man has swung full circle in this matter of recording his impressions; he began with picture writing on the walls of his caves, and he is apparently determined to end with it, in whatever refuge he may find from the world he is laying waste.

You will remember — at least some of you will — that song of the last war in which men had still the heart to sing, with its refrain: "How 'ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm, after they've seen Paree?" Now and then some of us ask ourselves — and thoughtful publishers, I think, are asking it anxiously — how are we to maintain the appeal of the book in a time when people are responding more and more to the auditory and pictorial presentation of ideas? That grotesque infant, television, is still in its swaddling clothes; to what extent it will develop during the next few years, no man can be certain; we can be sure, however, that it will be a much more

effective instrument than it is today. And children, even more than adults, are visual minded. When the day comes, and it is not far distant, when there is a television set in every other American home, it is going to be even harder than it is today to inculcate the habit of reading. And what of that satanic movement whose instigators are teaching the young to read faster and faster? The objective now, I believe, is so to train yourself that you can take in a page at a glance. Suppose these busy agents of the devil succeed in producing a generation of page rifflers who are able to race through a library like locusts swarming over a wheat field. What then becomes of poetry and the graces and subtleties of style? The prospect is not a reassuring one.

I read the other day that the designers of commercial airplanes are worrying over the problem of how to combat the increasing amount of boredom shown by passengers on long-distance flights. So many people, it seems, confined for so much as an entire day to sitting in the same place, are restive and means must be found of affording them distraction. An ominous commentary, is it not, on the inner resourcelessness that seems so characteristic of our age? Not even the mystery stories which share with sleeping pills the function of putting a fair portion of the nation to sleep at night are apparently equal to this emergency.

I could go on painting a black picture for you, reminding you that the weekly of largest circulation in what is essentially a newspaper and magazine-reading country is one whose appeal rests primarily on the art of the camera, and that its nearest competitor is one of the same nature. I could remind you that a monthly magazine whose name is almost synonymous with Boston has recently found it advisable to carry a pictorial cover; I could crowd you into a corner and insist on your acknowledgment of the fact that the magazine which is read by more people than any other in the world's history is made up of snippets, being predicated, apparently, on the proposition that twentieth-century man is incapable of fastening on any one topic for more than five minutes.

These are all facts, and disconcerting ones; and yet I believe

## J. DONALD ADAMS

there is a future for reading, and that we may talk with some sense about the readers of tomorrow. I have made some reference to the conditioning to which those readers are being subjected — the children who are now in our schools. I was much interested recently to learn of a new development in British educational practice — one which might seem to indicate that the future may not be wholly in the hands of the photographers. The experiment has been tried, and, I believe, with a gratifying eagerness of response on the part of the children, of interesting them in the great stories of history, not by means of a radio dramatization but through the medium of a specially devised newspaper. The great fire of London in 1666, for example, dominates one issue. There is a banner headline and a picture, of course, but there is also a detailed story of the fire, followed by eyewitness accounts, something about the relief measures instigated by the King, an editorial, letters to the editor, advertisements, a column called "World News in Brief," literary notes, and obituaries — including that of Cardinal Richelieu. With a nice regard for historical accuracy, no comics are included.

One reason, no doubt, for the eagerness with which the pupils have welcomed this innovation is that history is being brought to them through a very familiar medium, lacking in the formality which the textbook assumes in their minds. The only anachronism that has been indulged in the preparation of these journals is the employment of a modern format and style, which of course makes the reading easier than it would otherwise have been. The child gets a widely inclusive picture of the event, set against the background of its period, brought to him with something of the vividness of a contemporary happening. But might it not be also that the apparently great success of this experiment is due in part to the fact that here is a means of instruction which, while as pleasing to the child in its form as the radio or the movie, has the added value of being readily accessible to him as often as he wishes to turn to it? And do not let us forget that children are often wiser conservators than their elders; nothing is to them necessarily stale

merely because they have heard it before, and to them, unlike so many of their parents, any book is a new book if they have not read it before.

I cite this development merely as a consolatory straw in the wind; yet doesn't it suggest that more might be done than has been done to relieve the forbidding aspect that so many textbooks wear? I am no designer, and I have no specific proposals to make, but it seems to me that not nearly as much imagination, not nearly as much thought, have gone into the making of attractive texts as have been lavished on the books made primarily for children to enjoy. It has been my observation that children are frequently responsive to design in a surprising degree. It is always possible to appeal to their imagination when appeals to their reason are more strongly resisted, and I believe that books as physical objects might be made much more exciting for them than they are.

Now while it is true that the appeal of the book, both for children and adults, faces increasing and multiple competition in our distraction-seeking world, I believe that we do exaggerate the threat. We all know what a persistent habit, once formed, the habit of reading is; and we know too, from our experience in the Second World War with the extraordinary distribution and use of the Armed Service Editions, with what rapidity new readers can be made and how surprisingly wide can be the range of their reading. Let us not forget, either, the strange mesmerism of print: that curious and so often spurious authority that seems automatically to invest a page of type, even when it resembles closely a plate of tripe. Every writer, I think, has at some time been conscious of the suddenly added weight his words assumed when they were transferred, either from handwriting or typewriting, to the printed page. We consider seriously words that wear the vestments conferred upon them by Caslon or Goudy—words which, if spoken, we would let in one ear and out the other, unless they are pronounced with the disarming persuasiveness of a Roosevelt or the passionate invective of a Hitler.

No, I think there will be readers tomorrow, and tomorrow, and



## J. DONALD ADAMS

tomorrow. There is something about a man alone with a book in the quiet of his room or the comfort of his bed which sets that experience apart from all other conveyances of information or all other exchanges of opinion and thought. For the speaker's voice or physical presence may come between the listener and his words; the motion picture flashes its image before those who watch it and is gone; but the communion between writer and reader can be resumed again and again. They face one another, author and reader, with all barriers down, and without the injected distraction of other presences. It is the most direct and untainted form of communication that man has yet devised, the closest approach to disembodied spirit — even more so than music, which must have its instruments — that he knows. He will not, unless he is an even greater fool than we know him to be, easily abandon it.

He is more likely to abandon it, at least to the extent of reading old books in preference to new, if he becomes impatient, as many readers have, with what is offered him by contemporary writers, than he is because of what he can listen to over the radio or what is put before him on the screen. Nine times out of ten, the book is the superior product. I have seen and handled too many books professionally to have quite the same respect for them that I had when I read them years ago in college, yet I still believe that they can be among the most powerful forces in this world, second only to the deep instinctual drives that are common to all men, whether they be Harvard professors or coolies laboring on the eroded lands of Asia.

But the publishers are worried, and with good reason. Publishers are peculiar people; they are businessmen with a difference; the best of them are genuinely concerned with the worth-whileness of what they produce; they have a sense of responsibility for their product that is not so often apparent in the manufacturer of steel, tooth paste, or soap. They are conscious always that they deal with the imponderables of human nature, and that what they put between book covers may have an even more dynamic content than the atomic bomb. But they know also that what they produce is,



in the minds of most citizens, a luxury item, and that although their costs have risen in astronomical ratio, they cannot apply to the consumer the same pressure that has been applied in the matter of his housing and food. Books cost more than they should, but let it not be forgotten that the publisher is taking more of a risk and more of a loss than those who provide what the consumer cannot do without.

The publishers' need is for more book readers. We spend more money on newspapers and magazines than any other nation; we spend less on books than most others that are comparably literate; less than the people in Britain and on the Continent whose belts are drawn so much tighter than our own. Yet the profusion of magazines and their soaring circulations, the increasing demands made upon our public libraries (which we starve as we starve no other educational agency) and the public response to the reprint libraries offering books that have been proved good by time, all point to the fact that the appetite is there, and that the appeal of the book is, potentially at least, a strong appeal.

What then, can the publisher do to insure, so far as possible, that tomorrow's readers, and particularly tomorrow's readers of new books, will be larger in number than today's? They must be larger in number than they are if he is to survive as an effective force in our society, for the situation is more serious than is realized by the general public. Were it not for such windfalls as book-club choices, sales to the movies (from which the publisher ordinarily derives little), magazine condensations, and reprint sales, more than a few firms today would have to close shop. And these very props to the publisher's continued existence tend in the main toward an enforced lowering of his literary standards, act as a brake on his natural desire to take a chance on the development of new and original writers. Today he must sell between seven and ten thousand copies of a novel before he recovers his costs, and the average first novel falls well short of those figures. Once upon a time he could break even on a sale of two thousand.

There is, of course, contained within these destructive tenden-

## J. DONALD ADAMS

cies, as in so many others, a constructive one. The very conditions which I have cited impose upon the publisher, if he has the interests of literature at heart, a tighter selectivity, not only in the direction of the lower common denominator, but also in the direction of the genuinely good. There was a time, not long since, when it was altogether too easy for the writer of 75,000 inconsequential words to get them between book covers. That time is gone, and, I hope, never to return.

The publisher can help himself, it is true, by increasing care in selection, by still further improved methods of distribution, by a determined effort to lower costs, but by himself he cannot do the job that must be done. In the last analysis he is dependent, not on the public, which waits to be fed, but on that motive force of which he is only the instrument; I mean the writer.

Millions of Americans I think are in rebellion against the general content and approach to life of much contemporary American fiction. Nor is this rebellion limited to the mossbacks and the dodderers; it is shared by the young in years and in spirit as well. I know this from the representative letters I receive from nearly every state in the Union. Many potential book-buyers are in rebellion against books like *The Naked and the Dead*, which, although it achieved a place on the best-seller lists, seemed to them essentially false. It contained some vivid writing about the war and about men at war, but many readers found biased and distorted the picture of the America out of which those men came. They find such biased and distorted pictures all too frequent in our fiction. They find too seldom in our novelists any realization of the basic fact that man, whether American or Hindu, is essentially a creature of conflict, torn between satisfaction and aspiration. They find too little tolerance, too little sympathy, too little humor. They find laboratory technicians, disguised as novelists. Small wonder, then, that the libraries cannot keep sufficiently stocked with the novels of Dickens and Trollope, with the work of writers who were really interested in human nature and in the mystery of human character. Don't watch the best-seller lists to find what novels Americans

are reading; don't ask the smart dinner-tables; ask the librarians.

How long has it been since a poet spoke to the generality of men? I don't mean the Edgar Guests; I mean the poets who are remembered beyond their day. The contemporary poet, with rare exceptions, speaks to a clique, to a few other poets of his own circle, to a handful of academic critics who have confused science with art. There are those who will tell you solemnly that ours is not an age for poetry. They are wrong, tragically wrong. No age is allergic to poetry; it is one of man's deepest needs. Only the form in which it must be supplied varies from age to age. It is for our writers to find that form.

The problem of the publisher, the problem of the writer, this whole question of tomorrow's readers, rests upon the adjustment of the writer to his audience. That is the essential problem of the artist in our time, as it is of the artist in any time. The audience is there, waiting: a greater audience than any painter ever painted for, than any poet ever sang for, than any writer ever wrote for. If for no other reason than that man today realizes more fully than he ever has the revolting depths to which he can descend, the folly and stupidity of which he can be capable, and that bright and shining world which it is within his power to make, I believe that we can still have, and in this country before all others, a literature as great as any the world has yet known.



## *epilogue*

### PHILIP HOFER

THESE PAPERS GIVE MUCH SPECIFIC ADVICE, PHILOSOPHICALLY and soundly reasoned, but I think I had better concentrate in my few words on the broader concepts.

The printed book today faces its greatest challenge since the invention of printing. I think an encouraging sign is the fact that all these writers are thinking about the deeper meaning of what we are trying to do. All note a concern with what Mr. Kepes calls so well "not just the 'know how,' but the 'know why' and the 'know what.' " The happiness of man must be considered one of our major aims; which is to say, we must be contemporary — we must sense the spirit of our age in all we produce, not in the worst, but in the best meaning of the word.

One of the most important topics, obviously and overwhelmingly, is the expressed or unexpressed dissatisfaction of all the writers with present-day book design. Isn't the importance of book design such that it should challenge the insurgent spirits in the art world? I believe it is. It isn't only a question of whether the graphic arts should be up-to-date, but whether they should lead. There is no doubt of it. The graphic arts often led in the past. Many of us can prove, particularly those of us who have studied design of the past centuries, that book design has influenced all the other arts — crafts too, such as glass making, metal making, and weaving. We must recapture that leadership!

These remarks of Mr. Hofer's are very greatly condensed from his valuable recapitulation and summation of the addresses delivered at the symposium.





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# 1

•KEPES

•DWIGGINS







Theo van Doesburg, *Geometry and Typographical Design*

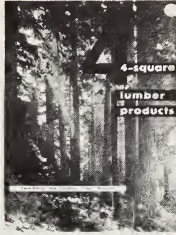
The new working principle and the rediscovery of the genuine nature of the two-dimensional picture plane have had a penetrating influence upon painting and upon others. Painters and designers, conditioned by the past, first examples of visual support and creative thought, became critical of their own work and began to understand the machine for their creative task. The revolutionary foundations of graphic order served as a mirror to show all the wrong conceptions and all the imperfections of the former use of the two-dimensional surface. It helped also to form out the designers' relation to the genuine nature of the respective materials and their correct use. Typographic product design, and all other fields of optical creation have gained by the reorientation of the inherent laws of their medium and by the search for better balance.

The painters themselves directed the first steps in this search. Theorists as early as 1916 applied the findings to typography. His reorientation of the fundamental structural principles of the picture area had a far-reaching influence on advertising design and typography. Horizontal and vertical elements in a form, containing relationship lead to a subordination of the surface with dynamic balance. Uninterrupted arrangements of letters and single rectangular elements showed the way for a new typography whose entire spatial logic is dictated by the nature of visual perception with functional emphasis on the message. New type faces were designed based upon the visual principles discovered by the painters.

Before the date of typography had been really reached. The former time of writing is an unorganically constructed arrangement of type reflecting various historical backgrounds and various times. A connection exists between these elements but none have emerged. Clashed and loose are some more powerful formal means even in the late abstract typographic. The present work is a historical book in content, rather well the laws of visual organization are with the technological methods of the graphic but with the new knowledge of new, beyond all being first in these it was put in moving ideas in page after one is represented using a line of great controlled by historically correct typographical.



Piet Mondrian, *Painting 1920*



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *Letter Design*

GYORGY KEPES

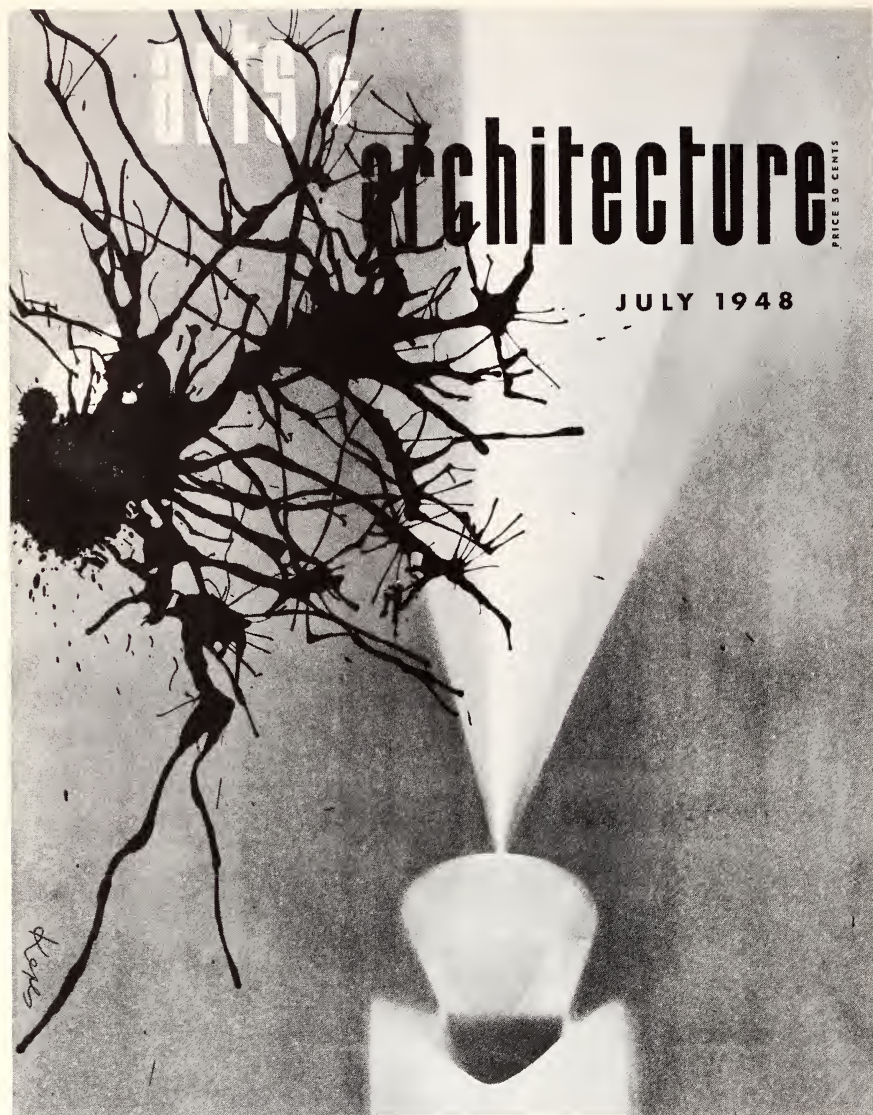
# LANGUAGE OF VISION

Painting, Photography, Advertising-Design



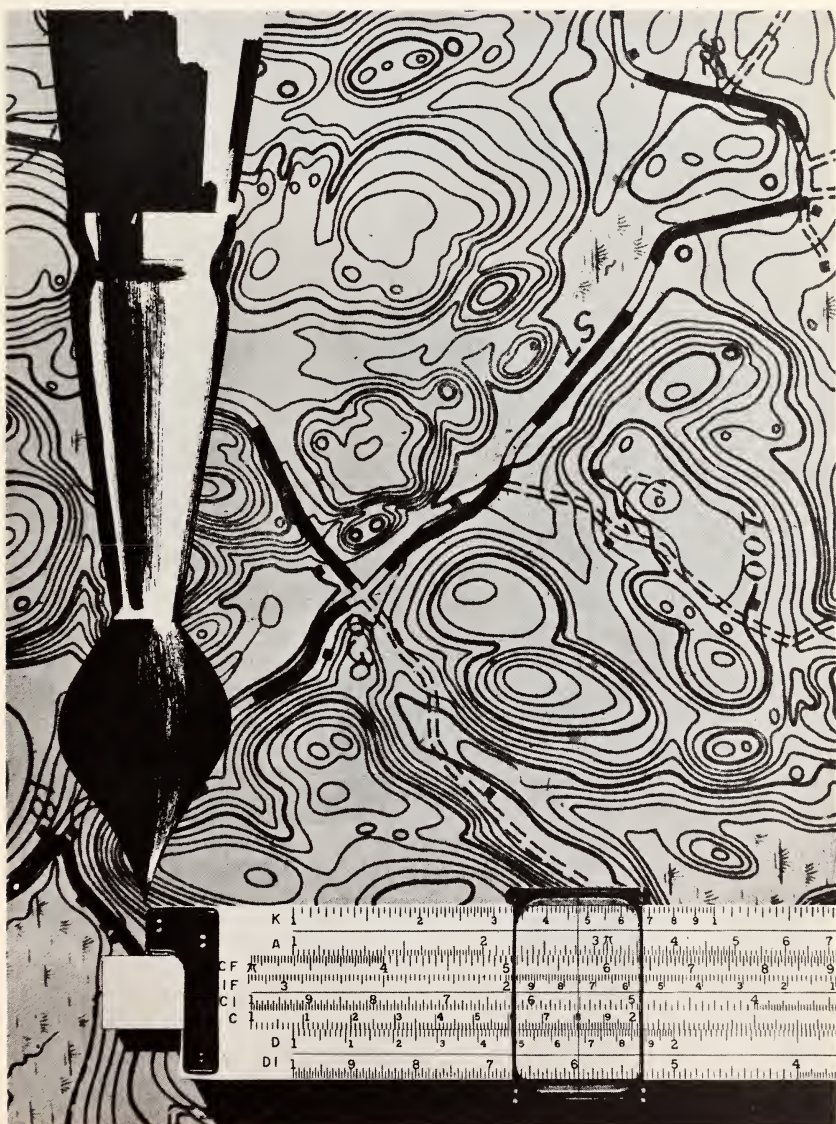
Paul Theobald

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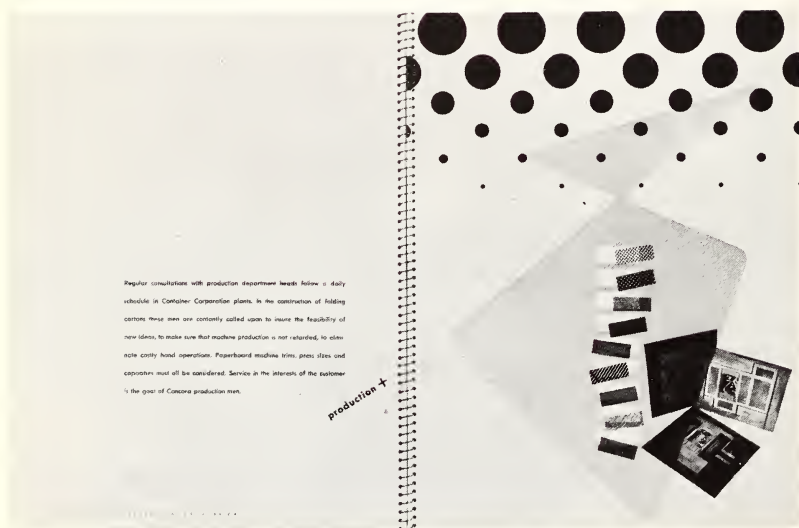
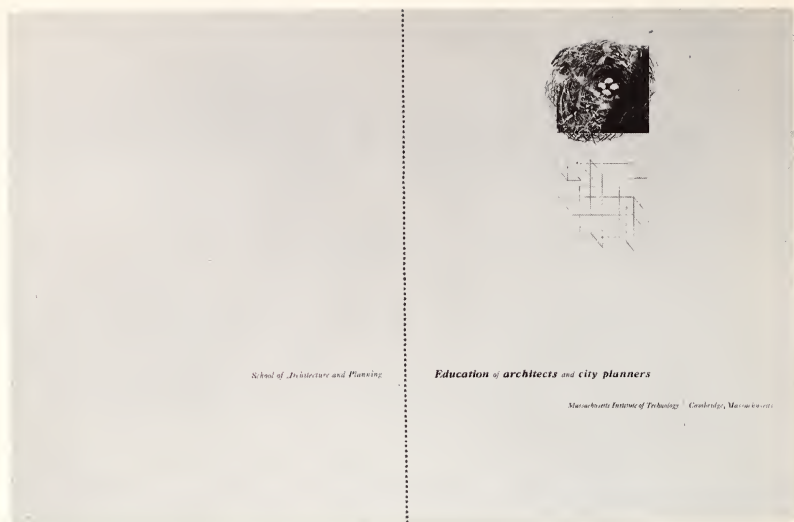
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# KEPES



# THE BOOK OF Naturalists



To Laurance and Mary Rockefeller

Jean HENRI FABRE (1823-1915)

clasped bands? Are their fingers mutually interlinked? Or is only one of the pair active; and, if so, which? Let us ascertain exactly; the thing is not without importance.

I place the lantern inside, in the centre of the cage. There is good light everywhere. Far from being scared, the Scorpions are gayer than ever. They come hurrying round the beacon; some even try to climb up, so as to be nearer the flame. They succeed in doing so by means of the framework containing the glass panes. They hang on to the edges of the tin strips and stubbornly, heedless of slipping, end by reaching the top. There, motionless, lying partly on the glass, partly on the support of the metal casing, they gaze the whole evening long, fascinated by the burning wick. They remind me of the Great Peacock Moths that used to hang in ecstacy under the reflector of my lamp.

At the foot of the beacon, in the full light, a couple lose no time in standing on their heads. The two fence prettily with their tails and then go a-strolling. The male alone acts. With the two fingers of each claw, he has seized the two fingers of the corresponding claw of the Scorpioness bundled together. He alone exerts himself and squeezes; he alone is at liberty to break the team when he likes; he has but to open his pincers. The female cannot do this; she is a prisoner, handcuffed by her ravisher.

In rather infrequent cases, one may see even more remarkable things. I have caught the Scorpion dragging his sweetheart along by the two fore-arms; I have seen him pull her by one leg and the tail. She had resisted the advances of the outstretched hand; and the bully, forgetful of all reserve, had thrown her on her side and clawed bold of her at random. The thing is quite clear: we have to do with a regular rape, abduction with violence. Even so did Romulus youths rape the Sabine women.

The brutal ravisher is singularly persistent in his feats of prowess, when we remember that things end tragically sooner or later. The ritual demands that he shall be eaten after the wedding. What a strange world, in which the victim drags the sacrificer by main force to the altar!

From one evening to the next, I become aware that the more corpulent females in my menagerie hardly ever take part in the sport of the linked team; it is nearly always the young, slim-waisted ones to whom the ardent strollers pay their addresses. They must have sprightly flappers. True, there are moments when they have interviews with the others, accompanied by strokes of the tail and attempts at harnessing; but these are brief displays, devoid of any great

HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862)

The Pond

From *Walden*, 1854



[THOREAU was born only forty-one years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Yet whenever I read him, the lead dust from his home-made pencils seems yet unbrushed from his writings. Everything in *Walden* could happen tomorrow. Volumes have been written about Thoreau's philosophy, his lack of science, his style, mysticism, and inner meanings, but the simplicity and directness of his natural-history observations elude all classification and diagramming. Either you agree with the pince-nez-on-a-black-ribbon estimate of an English poet and say "Thoreau isn't much," or you read, and at intervals reread, *Walden* and his story of the seasons, and become less and less articulate but more quietly, completely satisfied.]

SOMETIMES, having had a surfeit of human society and gossip, and worn out all my village friends, I rambled still farther westward than I habitually dwell, into yet more unfrequented parts of the town, "to fresh woods and pastures new," or, while the sun was setting, made my supper of huckleberries and blueberries on Fair Haven Hill, and laid up a store for several days. The fruits do not yield their true flavor to the purchaser of them, nor to him who raises them for the market. There is but one way to obtain it, yet few take that way. If you would know the flavor of huckleberries, ask the cow-boy or the partridge. It is a vulgar error to suppose that you have tasted huckleberries who never plucked them. A huckleberry never reaches Boston; they have not been known there since they grew on her three hills. The ambrosial and essential part of the fruit is lost with the bloom which is rubbed off in the market cart, and they become mere provender. As long as Eternal Justice reigns, not one innocent huckleberry can be transported thither from the country's hills.

Occasionally, after my hoeing was done for the day, I joined some impatient companion who had been fishing on the pond since morning, as silent and motionless as a duck or a floating leaf, and, after practising various kinds of philosophy, had concluded commonly,

The Courtship of the Scorpion

fervour. No sooner be she seized by the fingers than the portly temptress, with a blow of her tail, rebukes the untimely familiarity. The rejected suitor retires from the contest without insisting further. They go their several ways.

The big-bellied ones are therefore elderly matrons, indifferent nowadays to the effusive manners of the pairing-season. This time last year and perhaps even before, they had their own good spell; and that is enough for them henceforth. The female Scorpion's period of gestation is consequently extraordinarily long, longer than will be often found even among animals of a higher order. It takes her a year or more to mature her germs.

Let us return to the couple whom we have just seen forming up beneath the lantern. I inspect them at six o'clock the next morning. They are under the tile linked precisely as though for a stroll, that is to say, face to face and with clasped fingers. While I watch them, a second pair forms and begins to wander to and fro. The early hour of the expedition surprises me: I had never seen such an incident in broad daylight and was seldom to see it again. As a rule it is at nightfall that the Scorpions go strolling in couples. Whence this hurry today?

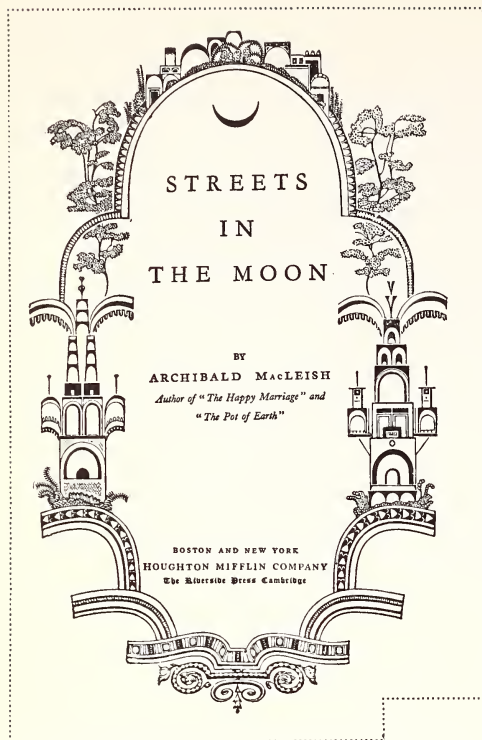
I seem to catch a glimpse of the reason. It is stormy weather; in the afternoon, there is incessant, very mild thunder. St. Medard, whose feast fell yesterday, is opening his floodgates wide; it pours all night. The great electric tension and the smell of ozone have stirred up the sleepy hermits, who, nervously irritated, for the most part come to the threshold of their cells, stretching their questioning claws outside and enquiring into the condition of things. Two, more violently excited than the others, have come out, influenced by the intoxication of the pairing which is enhanced by the intoxication of the storm; they suited each other; and here they are solemnly marching to the sound of the thunder-claps.

They pass before open huts and try to go in. The owner objects. He appears in the doorway, shaking his fist, and his action seems to say:

"Go somewhere else; this place is taken."

They go away. They meet with the same refusal at other doors, the same threats from the occupant. At last, for want of anything better, they make their way under the tile where the first couple have been lodging since the day before. The cohabitation entails no quarrelling; the first settlers and the newcomers, side by side, keep very quiet, each couple absorbed in meditation, completely motionless, with fingers still clasped. And this goes on all day. At five o'clock





STREETS IN THE MOON

NO LAMP HAS EVER SHOWN US WHERE  
TO LOOK

No lamp has ever shown us where to look.

Neither the promiscuous  
And every-touching moon

nor stars  
Either with their not much caring

nor  
Lights to seaward and far off

[ 3 ]

plays accurately in tune. There is variability in this matter among Tibetan as among European bands: that of Likhir was beautifully exact; but in certain decadent monasteries, careless ensemble and bad intonation reduced music to a mere cacophony; indeed, the standard of orchestral playing is often a very fair index of the moral state of any *Gompa*. Raising their heads, the wayfarers caught sight of the group of red-robed musicians high up on the walls. Surely no crusading baron returning to his castle from the Holy Land could have enjoyed a more romantic welcome.

As the riders rounded the last bend, a throng of lamas and peasants ran out towards them. They dismounted from their ponies and, casting the bridles into willing hands, advanced to an alleyway where a tall and venerable figure stood a little apart. He was the prior, before whom knees were bent and foreheads touched the ground. Signing to the party to follow, he turned and led the way at a rapid pace, threading a labyrinth of courts and stairs and passages to the topmost terrace of all, marked at the angles by banners, rather like furled umbrellas. Then he passed through the doorway of the abbot's private apartment, which, as was customary, was situated at the top of the building. They removed their shoes and stepped inside a chamber of surpassing magnificence.

The roof was supported on wooden posts, the bracketed capitals of which, as well as all the beams, window-frames, and other woodwork, were picked out in delicate patterns of flowers and dragons of brilliant hue. The windows, which were flung wide open, affording a grand view over the mountains, were of Chinese design, with a kind of translucent paper to take the place of glass. The walls of the room were hung with scroll paintings representing saints or angelic beings, each picture being mounted on Chinese brocade of richest design. The ceiling was like a tent, with an awning of peach-coloured Chinese embroidery of ancient date. Along one wall, facing the window, stood the altar, behind which presided a row of gilt, lotus-throned figures shod by elaborate carved canopies. The floor was spread with fine rugs of Turkistan and Tibet, on which the guests were bidden to take their seats; a charming little carved and painted table was placed before each man to hold his tea-cup and food-bowl. Each article was a work of art of real worth and had been kept in spotless condition, though put to reasonable use. How differently works of art appear when they are thus related to life, as intended by their makers, and not im-

prisoned, on the plea of safeguarding, within those vast concentration-camps called museums.

No sooner was everybody seated than tea—that inevitable preliminary to all business in Tibet—was served out of a fine teapot, which after use was kept warm on an earthenware stove. The tea was equal to everything else at Likhir, prepared from the best brand, with the usual butter and salt and a pinch of soda added. The Tibetans daily consume a prodigious quantity of this tea, which to our taste seems rather more like soup. At every sip the cup is promptly refilled to the brim, and this goes on until the guest, after repeatedly making a polite show of refusal, finally decides to make a stand and covers his bowl with his hand, turns it upside down, or hides it under the table.

After the guests had drunk a good many cups of tea, food was also served: apricots both fresh and dried, a hard crystalline candy, and a kind of rice pudding containing currants, lightly fried and dusted with sugar. During the meal the old prior and one or two senior monks sat on the floor and carried on an elegant conversation covering a varied range of topics, while the young novices crowded in the doorway to watch and listen.

The boys are carefully brought up and have excellent manners, each one being allotted to a tutor who instructs him in deportment as well as letters. They do not look repressed in any way, but are, on the contrary, extremely lively save on occasions when etiquette requires a grave demeanour. Up to the age of fourteen their duties do not amount to much more than pouring out tea at intervals during services, and playing instruments in the orchestra; but after that they are expected to leave the monastery and make the long journey to Lhasa for their university studies. Unless they choose to take a degree corresponding to our Doctor of Divinity, for which at least ten years' work is demanded, they go back to their monastery after a few years as fully fledged choir-monks, being allotted rooms of their own, more like those in an Oxford college than a friar's cell.

Our three pilgrims gained some prestige from the fact that their dialect, clothes, and customs derived from the Central Provinces. Their own home, however, was in New Babylon, on the farthest confines of the Lands of the Setting Sun, a region that was in process of being enslaved by three malignant demon kings named Progress, Hurry-Hasty, and Propaganda (like many felons, the last-named has several aliases, the commonest of which is simple Mr. Education); these tyrants forced their subjects to work at a rate so intense that they might well have

strength of the materialistic inheritance from the Empire, that Bernard does not always seem fully to have believed in himself. He was tinged with some shade of scepticism. The meeting at Vézelay was held on March 24, 1146. Four weeks later, on April 21, at a council held at Chartres, the command of the army to invade Palestine was offered to the Abbot of Clairvaux. Had the saint thoroughly believed in himself and his twelve legions of angels, he would not have hesitated, for no enemy could have withstood God. In fact he was panic-stricken, and wrote a letter to the pope which might befit a modern clergyman.

After explaining that he had been chosen commander against his will, he exclaimed, "Who am I, that I should set camps in order, or should march before armed men? Or what is so remote from my profession, even had I the strength, and the knowledge were not lacking? . . . I beseech you, by that charity you especially owe me, that you do not abandon me to the wills of men."\*

During 1146 and 1147 two vast mixed multitudes, swarming with criminals and women, gathered at Metz and Ratisbon. As a fighting force these hosts were decidedly inferior to the bands which had left Europe fifty years before, under Tancred and Godfrey de Bouillon, and they were besides commanded by the semi-emasculated King of France.

The Germans cannot be considered as having taken any part in the war, for they perished without having struck a blow. The Greek emperor caused them to be lured into the mountains of Asia Minor, where they were shandoned by their guides, and wasted away from exposure, hunger, and thirst, until the Saracens destroyed them without allowing them to come to battle.

The French fared little better. In crossing the Cadmus Mountains, their lack of discipline occasioned a defeat, which made William of Tyre wonder at the ways of God.

To no one should the things done by our Lord be displeasing, for all his works are right and good, but according to the judgment of men it was marvellous how our Lord permitted the Franks (who are the people in the world who believe in

\* Letter 296, ed. of 1877, Paris.

him and honour him most) to be thus destroyed by the enemies of the faith.\*

Soon after this check Louis was joined by the Grand Master of the Temple, under whose guidance he reached Attalia, a Greek port in Pamphylia; and here, had the king been a rationalist, he would have stormed the town and used it as a base of operations against Syria. In the eyes of laymen, the undisguised hostility of the emperor would have fully justified such an attack. But Louis was a devotee, bound by a vow to the performance of a certain mystic formula, and one part of his vow was not to attack Christians during his pilgrimage. In his mind the danger of disaster from supernatural displeasure was greater than the strategic advantage; and so he allowed his army to rot before the walls in the dead of winter, without tents or supplies, until it wasted to a shadow of its former strength.

Finally the governor contracted to provide shipping, but he delayed for another five weeks, and when the transports came they were too few. Even then Louis would not strike, but abandoning the poor and sick to their fate, he sailed away with the flower of his troops, and by spring the corpses of those whom he had deserted bred a pestilence which depopulated the city.

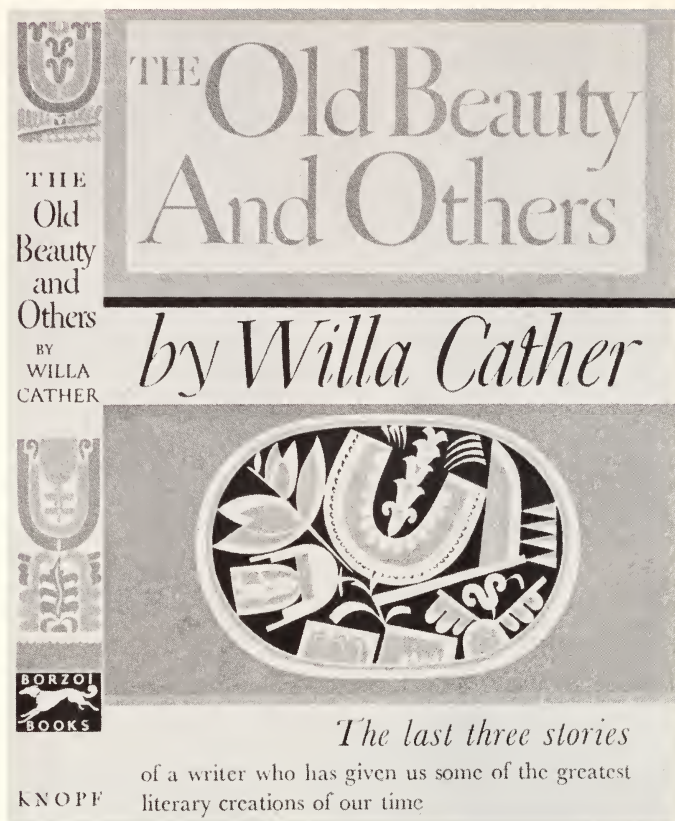
When he arrived at Antioch new humiliations and disasters awaited him. Raymond de Poitiers was one of the handsomest and most gifted men of this time. Affable, courteous, brave, and sagacious, in many respects a great captain, his falling was a hot temper, which led him to his ruin. He forsook Joscelin through jealousy, and the fall of Edessa cost him throne and life.

After the successes of Zenghi, a very short experience of Nour-ed-Din sufficed to convince Prince Raymond that Antioch could not be held without re-establishing the frontier; and when Louis arrived, Raymond tried hard to persuade him to abandon his pilgrimage for that season, and make a campaign in the north.

William of Tyre thought the plan good, and believed that the Saracens were, for the moment, too demoralized to resist. Evidently, by advancing from Antioch, Nour-ed-Din could have been

\* *Hist. des Croisades*, xvi. 85.

DWIGGINS



*jacket*

# 2

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• TEAGUE

• WARD









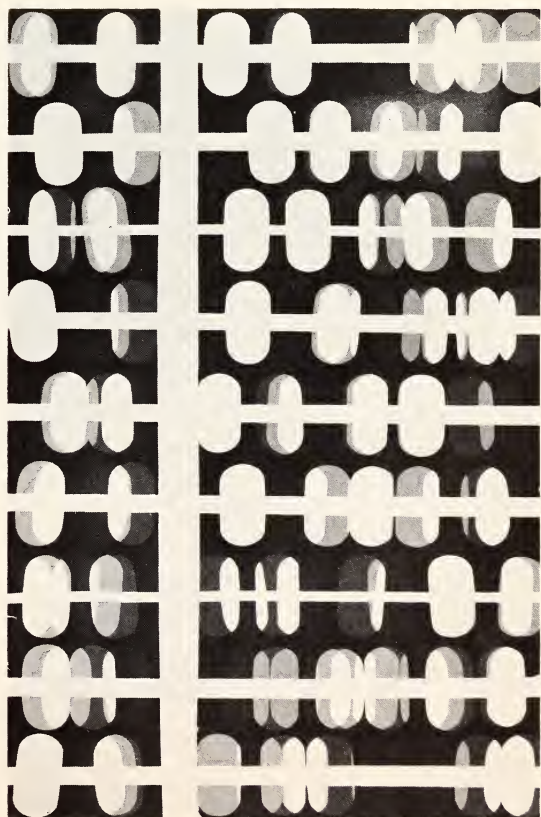
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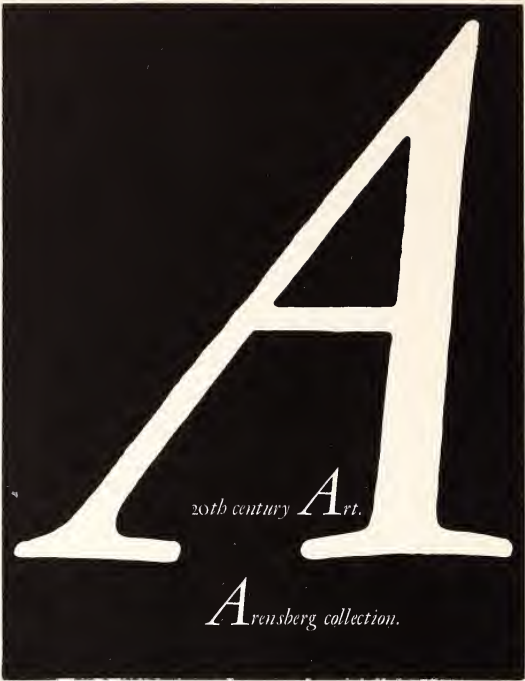


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RAND



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A



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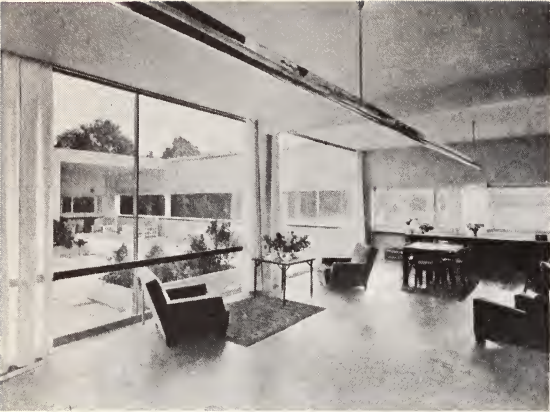


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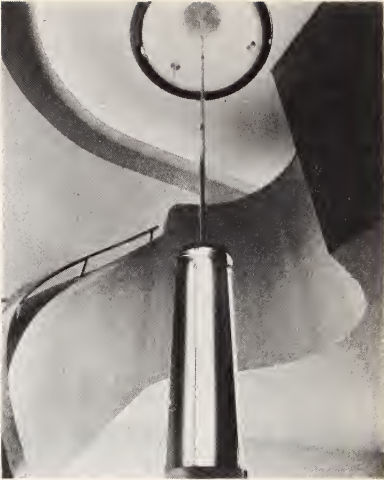


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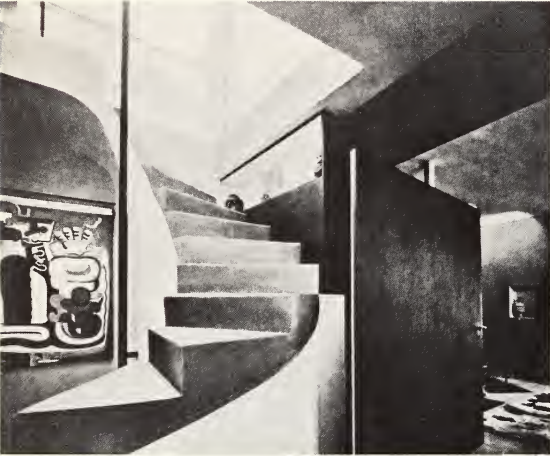




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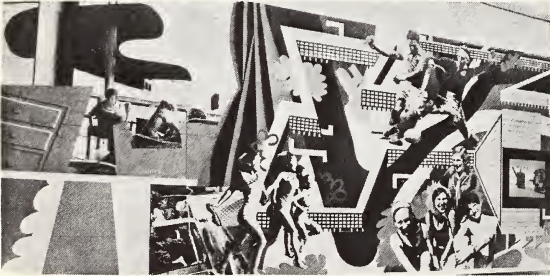
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TEAGUE



P



Q



R



S





# frankenstein

or *The Modern Prometheus*

by MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

SHELLEY · with engravings on wood

by LYND WARD · New York · 1934

HARRISON SMITH AND ROBERT HAAS



wood engravings



## W CHAPTER VIII

WE passed a few sad hours, until eleven o'clock, when the trial was to commence. My father and the rest of the family being obliged to attend as witnesses, I accompanied them to the court. During the whole of this wretched mockery of justice I suffered living torture. It was to be decided, whether the result of my curiosity and lawless devices would cause the death of two of my fellow-beings: one a smiling babe, full of innocence and joy; the other far more dreadfully murdered, with every aggravation of infamy that could make the murder memorable in horror. Justine also was a girl of merit, and possessed qualities which promised to render her life happy: now all was to be obliterated in an ignominious grave; and I the cause! A thousand times rather would I have confessed myself guilty of the crime ascribed to Justine; but I was absent when it was committed, and such a declaration would have been considered as the ravings of a madman, and would not have exculpated her who suffered through me.

The appearance of Justine was calm. She was dressed in









# 3

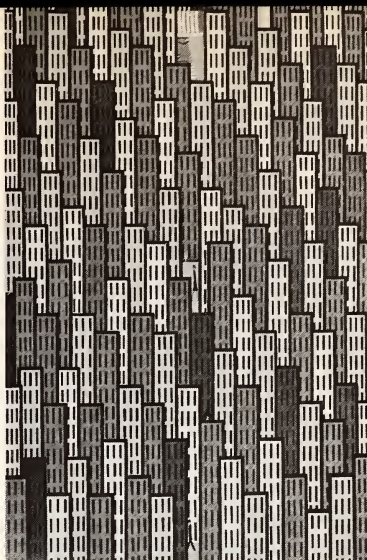
•LEVIT

•E BEILENSEN

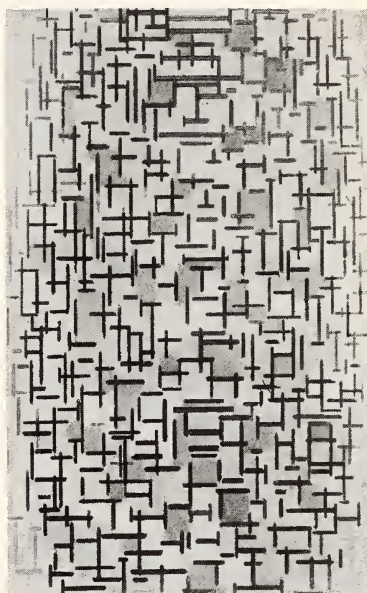
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LEVIT



MODEL #1 U.S.A.



MONDRIAN *composition, 1916*

ALBERS  
BOLOTOWSKY  
DILLER  
GLARNER  
HOLTZMAN  
MODEL

## POST-MONDRIAN PAINTERS

PEREIRA  
SALEMME  
L. SMITH

1949

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SIDNEY JANIS GALLERY  
OPENING MAY 12, 2, 5, 8 PM  
15 E 57 CLOSING JUNE 1

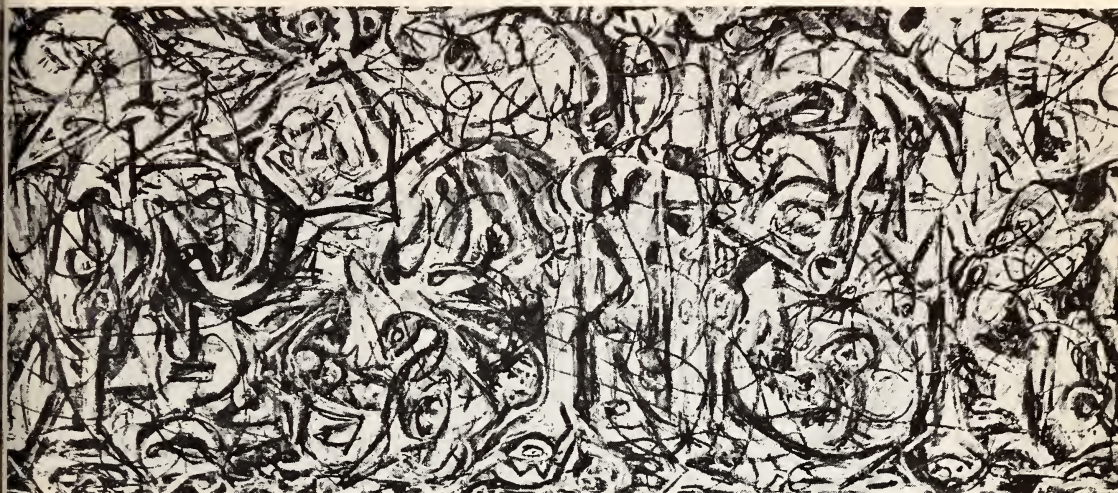
JANIS *cover*



LEVIT



LEVIT *advertising design, 1948*



POLLOCK *seven in eight, 1945*



LEVIT *linoleum cut*

LEVIT



LEVIT *advertising design, 1948*



# LANTERN SLIDES

BY

MARY CADWALADER JONES



PRIVATELY PRINTED

1937

## CHAPTER I

THE old Philadelphia into which I was born in the last days of 1850 was a comfortable place. Our narrow streets were not overcrowded by trams or motors; halbert-headed railings guarded sunny squares where fat squirrels hopped in greedy peace, and the people who lived in the red brick houses with green shutters and white marble doorsteps had time to know their neighbours.

Men were still alive who had heard the windows clack open, one after another, in October, 1781, as the watchman called out: "Past twelve o'clock of a cloudy night and Cornwallis is taken!" and many ladies, only middle-aged, had danced with La Fayette when he came out to be worshipped in 1824. My great-grandfather, Horace Binney, who did not seem older than a grandfather ought to be, had seen General Washington and Benjamin Franklin talking together outside the Philadelphia Library.

Except the Swedes and Germans, who kept to their own settlements, almost all the original makers of the city were Quakers, but the younger men and women gradually slipped out of that

[ 1 ]

UPDIKE title page, chapter title page, text page

### LANTERN SLIDES

contemplative faith, and by the time I came into the small part of a community which calls itself "society" it was largely Episcopalian, although there were some highly respected Presbyterians and still many Friends whose distinctive speech and dress were familiar and whose influence was shown by a reserve and self-esteem which those who did not like us were rude enough to call self-sufficiency.

William Penn is usually represented as staid and elderly, but there is a well-known portrait of him as a handsome youth in a cuirass, with flowing hair. He was then twenty-two; in the same year Mr. Pepys lamented that he had become "a Quaker, or some such very melancholy thing"; and he was thirty-eight when he held council with his mild-mannered Indians under the big elm tree. His grant from Charles II covered, roughly, about three hundred miles by one hundred and sixty, but he only spent between four and five years in his two visits to America, and his sons were there no more often than necessary.

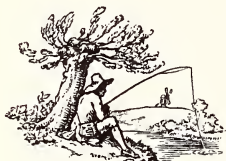
Pennsylvania is counted among the Middle States, but to most Philadelphians, so far as feelings and habits of life were concerned, the line dividing the North from the South ran between their own city and New York, while New Englanders were "Yankees," although without any

[ 2 ]

THE COMPLEAT  
ANGLER

*Or, The Contemplative Man's  
Recreation*

BEING  
A DISCOURSE OF FISH AND FISHING  
NOT UNWORTHY THE PERUSAL OF  
MOST ANGLERS



*The Riverside Press Edition*

1909



TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL  
*JOHN OFFLEY*  
OF MADELY MANOR IN THE  
COUNTY OF STAFFORD, ESQ  
MY MOST HONOURED  
FRIEND

SIR,



*Have made so ill use  
of your former fa-  
vors, as by them to be  
encouraged to intreat  
that they may be enlarged to  
the patronage and protection  
of this Book; and I have put  
on a modest confidence, that I*



TO THE  
*Reader of this Discourse*  
BUT ESPECIALLY TO  
THE HONEST  
ANGLER

**I** Think fit to tell thee these  
following truths; that I did  
not undertake to write, or  
to publish this Discourse of Fish  
and Fishing, to please my self, and  
that I wish it may not displease  
others; for I have confest there are  
many defects in it. And yet, I can-  
not doubt, but that by it, some  
readers may receive so much profit  
or pleasure, as if they be not very  
busie men, may make it not un-



THE COMPLETE  
ANGLER  
*Or, The Contemplative Mans  
Recreation*

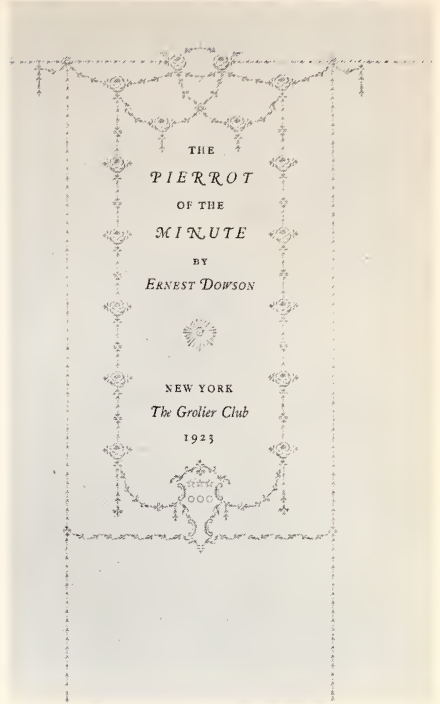
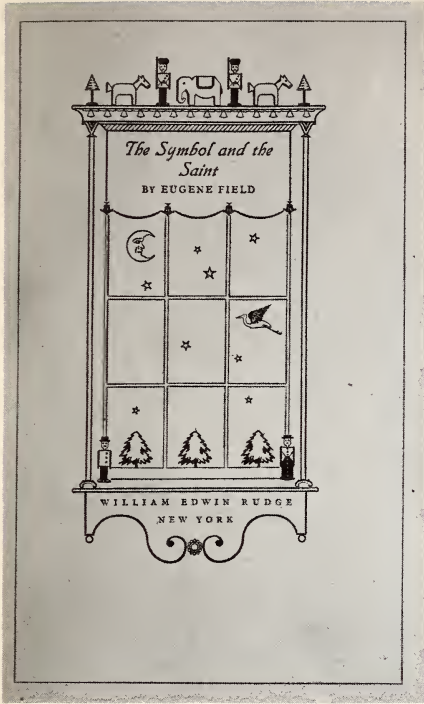
PISCATOR ♦ VIATOR

PISCATOR



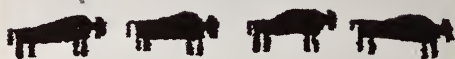
*YOU are welovertak-  
en Sir; a good morn-  
ing to you; I have  
stretch'd my legs up  
Totnam Hil to over-  
take you, hoping your businesse  
may occasion you towards Ware,  
this fine pleasant fresh May day in  
the morning.*





E. BEILENSON

NAVAJO



TEXTILE



A R T S

ARMITAGE *cover and title page*

NAVAJO



TEXTILE

A R T S

H. P. MERA

Laboratory of  
Santa Fe

Anthropology  
New Mexico

# THE GHOST IN THE UNDERBLOWS



BY ALFRED YOUNG FISHER  
EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
LAWRENCE CLARK POWELL • DESIGNED BY  
ALVIN LUSTIG AND PRINTED BY THE  
WARD RITCHIE PRESS AT LOS ANGELES  
CALIFORNIA • NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY

## WARS' HESPERIDES

I  
Against denial stands occurrence, proof  
Upon which build philosophers and some  
Who deny all philosophy. The event  
Proves strong as any facing opposite,  
As when calm death stares in the watery eyes  
Of immortality . . . But now I sing  
Of what stands ever in the road of peace,  
The shadowy dim fog of war in which  
Men stumble, wander blind and fall face down.  
Beyond prediction lowers this thick stuff,  
Indemnity that all constructed vanes  
Will not outpoint; from youth onward it has been so,  
And origins have not the less to tell than one  
Denying origins and waving a given flag  
Even in the second year of life, the month

33

Called second, war floated across the sun.  
The numbering of men began, and  
(Like critics who rush 'classics' to their side)  
All nations found blind justice blinded to their cause.  
How flags go up along the unmusical streets  
And noise makes tom-tom in the heart, and feet  
Keep time to hearts and hearts to the beat  
Of winged words! How worlds stand round  
Rating their chances on a controlled wheel!  
War floats across the sun and fire spatters out  
Like slag from an incandescent crucible;  
Down in the brain the heat melts out  
Pain and impure steel. But when it cools  
There is the stone, with its great way of staying,  
A little crumbling while, a little while.  
Down in the skull things shape  
Like hills and valleys, over which there go  
Soft waters, large-eyed cattle, Thetis and Corydon,  
And enchanted April weather when the moon  
Bewitches all the air . . . And there go  
The cohorts and the dragging guns, men  
Pulling their outrooted hearts as one pull  
A primitive plow through land clogged with bones.  
I hear the steady silence and the prayers of those men,  
Levites, who are for ever apart.  
There might be sun for a little while in the brain  
Did not again the fog creep down from heaven  
And rise from rotten lands. Imperceptibly across  
The sun floats fog, and stumbling,  
Blind and death-creating ways begin again.  
O, how do worlds and days go on with it  
And prophets make and make their comfortable lies!  
When occurrence fronts them like their own hands  
When they are sprawled in easy chairs,  
Their own hands, upon which looking there are different marks,  
The whorls and tendrils never the same but still  
A commonness about it all, enough

34

## AN ENCOUNTER

ANY ROAD NEAR THE CITY, where one meets nobody. All at once the dog is there, like a sudden thought. His behavior is, by design, dog-like. Seemingly he is completely concerned with his own small affairs, but inconspicuously he directs remarkably sure glances toward the stranger, who is proceeding on his way. None of these looks is lost. The dog is first before, then beside the walker, always engaged in furtive observation, which increases. Suddenly, as he overtakes the stranger,

Now then! Now then!

He gives precipitate tokens of his joy, with which he at length seeks to stop the traveler. The latter makes a quick, friendly pacifying gesture, which is also one of dismissal; and with a half-step to the left deftly passes by the dog.

The dog in happy expectation:

It's still going to happen.

He sobs from overabundance of emotion.

Finally, holding up his head, he flings himself before the more rapidly striding man. Now it is coming, he thinks, and proffers his muzzle beseechingly as a token of recognition. Now it is coming.

What? asks the stranger, hesitating a little.

The tension in the dog's eyes changes to embarrassment, to doubt, to dismay. Truly, if the man does not know what is to come, how is it to come? Both must know; only then will it come.

The walker again takes his half-step to the left, quite mechanically this time. He seems absent-minded. The dog stays before him and attempts—almost without any effort to be cautious—to look the stranger in the eye. Once he thinks he meets his gaze, but their glances do not cleave together.

Can it be that this trifle—? thinks the dog.

It isn't a trifle, says the stranger suddenly, attentive and impatient.

The dog is startled. How—he recovers himself painfully—when I feel that we . . . My soul . . . my . . .

Do not say it, the stranger interrupts almost angrily. They stand facing each other. This time their glances interpenetrate, that of the man and that of the dog, as knives fit into their sheaths.

The dog is the first to yield. He lowers his head, leaps to one side, and with a sidelong downcast look from the right, he confesses: I want to do something for you. I would do anything for you. Anything.

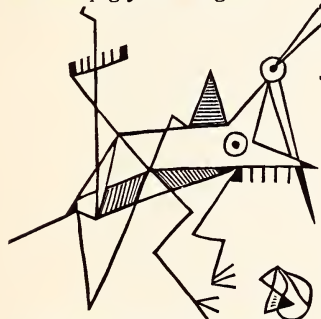
The man is once more on his way. He pretends not to have understood. He is apparently unmindful of the dog; yet he tries now and then to look toward him. He sees him running about in queer, awkward perplexity, getting ahead, lagging behind. Suddenly the dog is a few steps ahead, facing the oncoming man in an

## AN ENCOUNTER

9

attitude of pawing, stretching forward from the high-set, tense hind quarters. With great self-command he makes a few frivolous, childishly playful movements, as though to evoke the illusion that his forepaws hold something alive. And then without a word he takes into his mouth the stone that had this rôle to play.

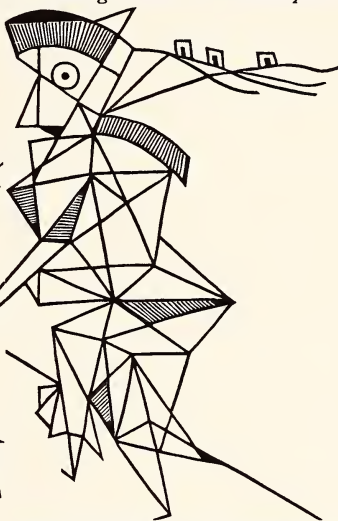
Now I am harmless and can say no more: that is shown by the nod with which he turns back. In this nod is something almost confidential, a kind of understanding that is by no means to be taken too seriously. The whole affair is somehow inconsequential and playful, and so too is the carrying of the stone regarded.



But now when the dog has the stone in his mouth, the man cannot forbear to speak.

We want to be reasonable, he says as he walks on, without bending down to the dog. Anyway, it can't be helped. What's the good of revealing ourselves to one another? Certain recollections must not be allowed at all. For a while I felt so too, and I almost asked you who

you are. You would have said, "Me," for there are no names between us. But, you see, that would have got us nowhere. It would only have



confused us still more. For I can confess to you now that for a while I was quite discomposed myself. Now I am quieter. If I could only convince you how utterly it is the same for me. In my nature there are if possible still more obstacles to a renewed relationship. You would not believe how hard it is for us.

As the stranger spoke thus, the dog perceived that there was no use keeping up the pretence of superficial play. In a way he was glad, but at the same time he seemed to be pervaded by an



P. BEILENSON



ROBINSON JEFFERS  
BY WILLIAM VAN WYCK

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THE WARD RITCHIE PRESS  
LOS ANGELES 1938

LUSTIG *title page*

# 4

•CHAMBERLAIN

•ARMITAGE









CHAMBERLAIN

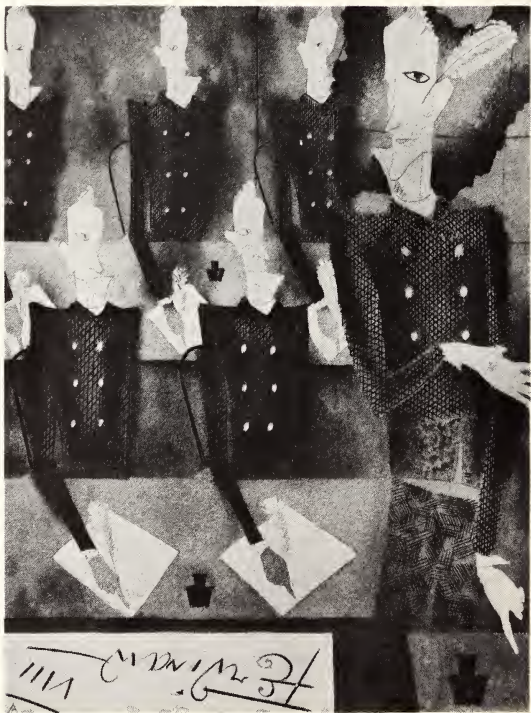
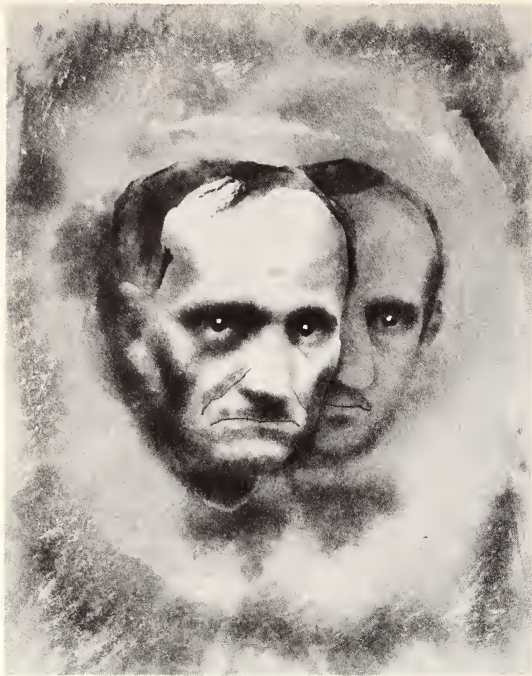


*gaston dorfinant*



*m. and mme dorfinant*

CHAMBERLAIN





ARMITAGE

MERLE ARMITAGE

# DANCE

M E M O R A N D A

Merle Armitage

# DANCE

Memoranda

EDITED BY EDWIN CORLE



Duell, Sloan & Pearce

New York



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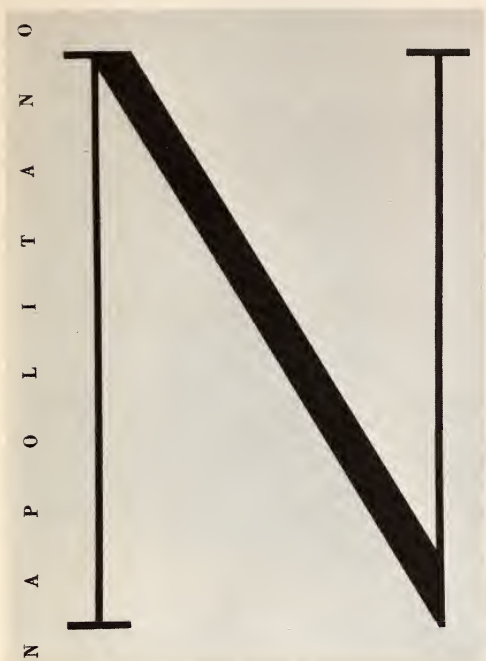
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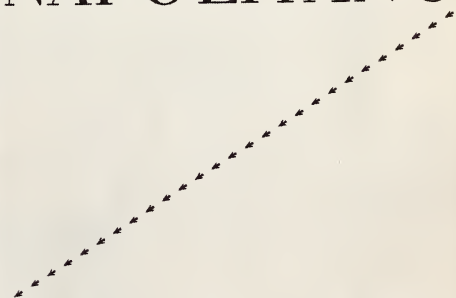


Sculpture is the most uncompromising of all art mediums. A sculptor can be neither a dilettante nor an idle experimenter. The cost of materials bars the former; the conviction necessary to his art eliminates the latter. A survey of modern sculpture discloses therefore the omnipotence of certain individuals, rather than the presence of a school, a style or a movement, as in certain other arts. Today there is no utilitarian demand for sculpture as in the past (particularly in Greece and medieval Europe) nor is it now an architectural necessity. The sculpture of our time is a

'work of art' standing alone and without a destination other than to afford esthetic pleasure for the initiated. This age of transition has brought a complete reversal of former relationships. Whereas the sculptor of the past was a member of a group serving the individual or building or place which needed him, and providing a style general to the community; the sculptor of today is an individual with a personal style, providing works of art for collective enjoyment in galleries and museums. It is significant that as quantity production by the machine progresses and increases, the highly individual work of the artist increases in value and ascends in importance. Yet it remains true that the real masters of every generation are those who can transmute their personal emotions and esthetic into a more impersonal and therefore more enduring realm.

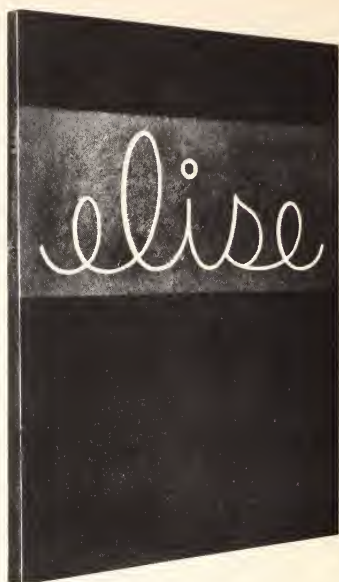


# NAPOLITANO



Fifteen reproductions of his work in oil, sgraffito, fresco, drawing and mechanical design. An Article by Merle Armitage. A Portrait by Brett Weston and an original lithograph drawn on the stone by Giovanni Napolitano and hand printed by Lynton R. Kistler. Published by E. Weyhe, 794 Lexington Avenue, New York, 1935.







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## KEEP CARD IN POCKET

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